

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT MORALS AND ETHICS AND
THE INFLUENCE OF THESE PERCEPTIONS ON TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS:

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: High School Teacher Perceptions of Student Morals and Ethics and the Influence of These Perceptions on Teacher-Student Interactions: A Qualitative Case Study

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In studies on teacher perceptions of student behavior, researchers found consistently that teachers' perceptions impact students' future behavior and the way students interact with teachers (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore high school teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethical frameworks in relation to classroom behaviors and what the implications are for these perceptions on how teachers interact with their students. Through this study, I examine how teachers interact with their students in behavior-related situations with relation to their own and their perceptions of their students' ethical frameworks and moral theories, particularly Consequentialism, Respect for Agents, Social Contract Theory, Virtue Theory, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, and Noddings' Ethic of Care.

As researchers have found, the topic of teacher perceptions is significant to student-teacher interaction and, consequently, student behavior (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). This study concentrates on the moral and ethical values that are the foundation of the student-teacher relationship through the teachers' perceptions. Myers & Pianta (2008) found that student behavior was directly related to the teacher-student relationship,

although some teachers do not believe this to be true (Modlin, 2008).

Findings from the four participant interviews and journals include various common perceptions teachers hold of student morals and ethics related to the students' behaviors, such as the social construction of student morality and emerging moral standards of high school students and how these perceptions influence the way teachers interact with certain groups of students, including high ability and African American students. The findings in this qualitative case study contribute to literature on teacher perceptions and the impact of those perceptions on students.

Keywords: ethical frameworks, moral theories, ethics, morals, teacher perceptions, teacher-student relationship, student behavior, African American, high school

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*I dedicate this work to God, who sustained me through this time in my life,
helped me to persevere, provided peace beyond understanding,
and gave me His Word as a foundation for my own morals and ethics.*

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalms 91:1)

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Positionality

When I was younger, my parents taught me to live by a strict moral code. I was raised in a Christian home, where morals and ethics were tied directly to the Bible. My justification for doing right was that the Bible defined the rules clearly. I could reference a passage from the Bible to justify helping others, not gossiping, not fighting, not cussing, not drinking, dressing modestly, being respectful to adults, being kind, and giving to charity, and the list could continue for pages. I needed no other reason for doing right because everyone in my circle of influence used this same logic or justification for doing right.

When I became a teacher, the values that my family had instilled in me contributed to how I interacted with my students. I wanted to see them as mirrors of myself, as moral citizens. When they faced an ethical dilemma, I wanted to guide them to make the right decision, the decision that I would make in that same circumstance. Little did I know, what was right to them was not the same as what was right to me. Who was right then? I began to see them as morally challenged, in need of teaching. How I came to view their moral value system began to inform my expectations of them. If they showed the same morals and values I held, I perceived them as well-behaved, good students. In contrast, if they did not express the same decision-making values I held, I perceived them to be morally deficient.

This was a traditional way of thinking that continues to permeate the educational system. In the early 1600s, when America was in its infancy, most of the moral teaching did not come from the church; morals were taught primarily at home and reinforced in school (McClellan, 2005). Just as teachers then felt it was their obligation to create moral citizens, so, too, did I

believe that this was part of my duty as an educator. My litmus test, however, was my own value system, the one I perceived to be right.

One particular experience challenged this way of thinking and made me reassess my perceptions of students and their morality and ethical basis for decision making. I had an African American student during my fourth year of teaching who exuded a tough persona. Carl* was a young lady who wanted to be referred to as a young man. Carl dressed in typically male clothing and carried himself how he believed a male should. I respected Carl's identity and began to work with Carl and the rest of his classmates in order to better understand how people perceived them and what influenced these perceptions. Many students in that class showed a harsh exterior, which I perceived as a defense against vulnerability. When I presented Carl's class with the essential question to the unit on Sophocles' *Antigone*, -- Is it more important to follow the law or to be loyal? -- I was surprised to hear that nearly every student claimed loyalty over law. In my small world, the law was the Bible even when the civil law did not encompass the offense, so I struggled to fathom how students could so easily dismiss civil law for loyalty to family or even just a friend. I perceived these students to be in need of moral education, deficient in ethical reasoning.

As I continued through this unit of study, Carl became a frontrunner in my class for critical thinking and literary analysis. The walls he had erected to ward off personal attacks of his character and choices began to fall. He tried to explain to me why his classmates would choose loyalty over law even when the consequences were dire. As we read through the play, I began to notice the students thinking more deeply about their own ethical decision making and the worthiness of the people for whom they claimed they would risk life-long incarceration or even death. I also began to understand why they had this mindset, and I began to then reflect on my

own perceptions about morality, good, and ethical decision-making. Could I understand why some students would choose a life behind bars in order to remain loyal to a friend who had broken the law? This was the moment that challenged the impact of my perceptions on my interactions with the students in my classroom.

As I began to open my eyes to their perspectives, the students returned that respect. On the last day of school that year, Carl drew a poster for me. On the back of that poster, he thanked me for introducing him to a life beyond gangs, an effect I never knew that I was cultivating through our shared dissonance about our varied ethical perspectives.

These experiences laid the groundwork for my interest in this study. If I could be an influence on a student by adjusting my perceptions of his morals and ethical decision making, could others do the same for the same type of population of students? This then brought many other questions to mind. In what ways does a teacher's perception of the students' morals affect the students' behavior and the student-teacher relationship? These are the questions I have attempted to answer with this qualitative case study examining teachers' perceptions of their students' morals and ethical frameworks as the teachers interact with the students in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

In studies on teacher perceptions of student behavior, researchers found consistently that teachers' perceptions impact students' future behavior and the way students interact with teachers (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). Due to this implied support for the importance of teachers' understanding of students' moral development and ethical reasoning, researchers recommend further studies to be conducted on the underlying issues for negative behavior in students. If, as Roderick (2003) found, there is a mismatch

between the developmental needs of students and the school environment, studies must be conducted that illuminate this mismatch in order to determine how to effectively connect teacher pedagogy with student needs in order to positively impact interactions in the classroom. A student's underlying value system, or morals and ethical framework, from which he or she operates is just one of the variables to which a teacher could connect and understand in order to positively impact these interactions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethical frameworks in relation to classroom behaviors and what the implications are for these perceptions on how teachers interact with their students. Through this study, I examined how teachers interacted with their students in behavior-related situations with relation to their own and their perceptions of their students' ethical frameworks and moral theories, as discussed in the literature review.

Local Context

The study was conducted in a secondary school within the city district limits in a Midwestern city. The high school that was the context of the study was primarily urban, serving a majority minority population. This school was chosen because of its high minority population in this district. There were several high schools in the district that met these criteria. The school that was chosen was selected because of ease of access and location. A letter (see Appendix A) was sent to this school after the research study was approved by the district director of research, requesting official access.

Significance of the Study

This study examined what teachers think about the morals and ethics of students in the classroom. In doing so, this study will contribute to literature on teacher perceptions and the impact of those perceptions on students. As researchers have found, teacher perceptions are significant to student-teacher interaction and, consequently, student behavior (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). This study will also contribute to literature examining morals and ethics in an educational context, particularly with teachers and students, as data were analyzed through the lens of Kohlberg's (1981) Stages of Moral Development, among other moral and ethical frameworks, which has received more attention in the fields of medical science and psychology than the field of education.

Where there is a problem, there is a need. Since the context, or school, for the research study had such a high African American population, it was important, then, to examine the literature related to African American student behavior, morals, and ethical frameworks. This study was premised on the claim from Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell (2003) that African American males are being suspended at a much higher rate than their other-racial counterparts. Studying teacher perceptions regarding the moral principles and ethical reasoning of the study site's majority demographic helped illuminate reasons for these higher rates of office referrals, resulting in suspensions. The study will help educators understand how to address students' morals and ethics with regards to the students' behavior to hopefully keep students in the classroom and out of the principal's office.

Finally, this study has opened avenues for further research. After data are reported on teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics, a study can be conducted examining students' ethical reasoning from their own perspectives to see if there is a mismatch, as asserted from a

study by Roderick (2003) and Tyler et al. (2010). If there is a mismatch between student needs and culture, their moral development, and the school environment, a future study of which moral or ethical framework a student uses for decision making in behavior-related situations would bring about a deeper understanding of why students react the way they do and how to help them react in a socially appropriate manner for their age and maturity level, perhaps matching teacher expectations to student development.

Research Questions

The following research questions provide the basis for this qualitative case study:

1. How do high school teachers perceive underlying morals and ethics of their students?
2. How do teacher perceptions of their students' morals and ethics influence teacher-student interactions?
3. What other implications for the classroom, if any, are implicit in these teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, components of the theoretical underpinnings are detailed as they relate to the methods of the study, although the rationale for the methodology will not be discussed until Chapter Three within the *Research Design* section. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the works of Crotty (1998) and Creswell (2014). The framework consisted of a constructivist worldview, or what Crotty (1998) would call epistemology. He referred to this as *constructionism*, but for this study, I used Creswell's (2014) term, *constructivism*, as it most closely fit the philosophical foundation that supported my study. The second element of the framework for this study was the research design, which Crotty (1998) referred to as the methodology. I employed a pragmatic qualitative approach for this study. Thirdly, the theoretical framework for this study included the methods element, which was case study research. All of

the elements of this theoretical framework will be comprehensively defined in the following paragraphs. The framework is represented in *Figure 1* below and discussed in the following sections.

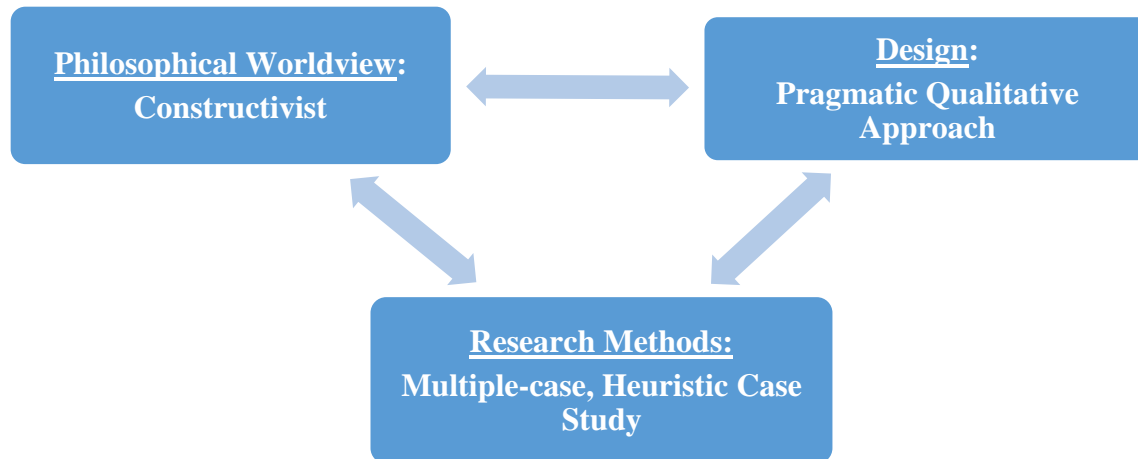


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Constructivism

Creswell (2014) used the term, *philosophical worldview*, to refer to the underlying beliefs that provided a foundation for the research study. This study was underpinned by a constructivist worldview. Constructivism was defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a belief that “human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations (p. 15). Creswell (2014) put it more simply when he defined it as the way we understand our own world. This study, intrinsically motivated by the researcher, was, therefore, an attempt to construct reality as perceived by educators and to learn how that impacted their own world.

Pragmatic Qualitative Approach

I conducted this case study using a pragmatic qualitative research design (Merriam, 1998; Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). This type of research is interpretive and flexible and

focuses on phenomena, such as individuals, structures, or processes (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). This approach to case study research is flexible in that it does not strictly require a theoretical perspective, as required in Crotty's (1998) research framework; rather, it "draws upon the most sensible and practical methods available in order to answer a given research question(s)" (p. 171). For this reason, all decisions for the research methods were chosen deliberately as to guide the study in the most appropriate manner and to best answer the research questions.

Pragmatic qualitative research finds its place on the continuum between interpretive and descriptive so that the focus remains on the case and not the research methodology (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). It was also necessary to make the researcher's positionality and assumptions transparent, especially since the study contained what Savin-Baden & Majors (2013) calls *casts*. These casts are traces of other research approaches; my own study contained casts of phenomenology, but not directly enough to choose this as a methodology. I have made my positionality transparent in Chapter One.

There are also advantages and challenges associated with pragmatic qualitative research as a case study approach. Some researchers may count it as an advantage not to have to choose a theoretical perspective so that they remain neutral, which is common in education; however, not choosing a theoretical perspective can also present a challenge. Some may believe the researcher to be choosing the "easy" way by using a pragmatic approach, but the burden then is on the researcher to justify each decision and to ensure its cohesiveness. For this study, no theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998) was chosen since I employed Creswell (2014) for my theoretical framework, which does not call for a theoretical perspective; rather, the philosophical worldview encompassed the whole of the researcher's perspective.

Case Study Research

In case study research, the “researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a program, event, activity, process or individual(s)” (Creswell, 2014, p.14). As a methodology, case study encompasses all of the decisions that will be made from limiting the participants to data collection to data interpretation. The case is the phenomenon in the context and cannot be separated (Yin, 2003). In fact, the case is bounded, which means that the researcher constructs parameters in which to conduct the research. Once the case is bounded, the research questions can then be written to decide what the researcher wishes to know. Case studies began as quantitative research in the late 1820s, and educational case studies originated with Yin and Stake many years later, both pragmatic researchers, an approach, which has been explained in the previous section.

Savin-Baden and Majors (2013) categorize the types of case study research by purpose, discipline, and research approach. According to case study types by purpose, exploratory case studies were akin to pilot studies. Descriptive case studies have rich narratives and are characterized by the case, meaning the subject and the context. A third type, instrumental, is used “to confirm theories” (p. 155). Explanatory case studies seek cause-effect relationships, and evaluative case studies, often used in education, are used “to judge the merit of a case” (p. 156).

Case studies by discipline include the following:

- Anthropologic: focuses on a culture
- Historical: primary sources and the evolution of institutions or programs
- Psychological: use of individuals to examine behavior
- Sociological: societal constructs as a lens
- Educational: used in school to help inform practice and theory

After the case has been identified and bound and the research questions written, particularly “how” and “why” questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003), the researcher must decide on a single or multiple case study. According to Yin (2003), a single case study, in the common sense, concerns everyday conditions and social processes of a single event, person, or activity, for example. These single case studies can be holistic or embedded. Holistic single case studies deal with the global understanding of the case and context, where embedded case studies have subunits that are studied. Yin cautions that the research should focus on the case as a whole instead of abandoning the case to focus on the sub-units. He also says that choosing embedded case study can cause the research phenomenon to shift from the case to one of the subunits, a setting perhaps.

Case study research offers flexibility for researchers and can allow them to immerse themselves in a deep and thorough understanding of the case. Several challenges exist, however, of which the researcher should be aware. First, case study research can be viewed as invasive, so the burden is on the researcher to maintain that relationship with the context or case. Additionally, participants must be chosen carefully. Because there are so few participants in a case study, each chosen participant must be able to provide rich data (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013).

Another significant challenge to qualitative case study research is that it cannot typically be generalized as quantitative studies can (Merriam, 1998). This is due to the notably smaller sample size used in most case studies. Yin (2014) suggests, however, that case studies can carry *analytic* generalizations, which are similar to describing the lessons learned from the study. These lessons are not generalizable in the way one would consider statistics from an

experimental study to be generalizable, but these lessons can teach or inform about a population with the likeness of the case study sample.

Definition of Terms

Morals: An interplay exists between morals and ethics. For this study, definitions were derived from the work of Strike, Haller, and Soltis (2005) where morals represent the specific principles assigned to an action. Morals are the values that one considers personal and universally good (Campbell, 2003).

Ethics: According to Campbell (2003), ethics involves how we apply our personal moral principles in social situations. She believes this to be the collective right from wrong as opposed to the personal (morals).

Ethical frameworks: Ethical frameworks are structures on which we base our decision making in moral dilemmas. They represent the broader context of reasoning in which morals are expected and utilized. The ethical frameworks used as lenses in this case study were taken from Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill and represent three very different ways of solving moral dilemmas. These ethical frameworks considered during data collection and analysis were Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, Kant's Respect for Agents, and John Stuart Mill's Consequentialism. It is important to note here that the ethical frameworks are not used as the theoretical framework for the study because the case study method is not instrumental. In other words, I am not trying to confirm these frameworks; rather, I am using them as lenses through which to view teacher perceptions. For more information on instrumental case studies, please review the previous section on case study research.

Consequentialism: This ethical framework, based on Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill, asserted that the moral decision that should be made was the one that made the most people happy because happiness was regarded above all (Rachels & Rachels, 2015). Strike, Haller, and Soltis (2005) described this framework as decision making that benefits the majority of people.

Respect for Agents: Respect for agents is most closely related to the Golden Rule (Strike et al., 2005). In this framework, we must treat each person as an individual, as human, with no alternate lens. This means that all would be equal and receive equal treatment regardless of relationship, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, or any other cultural identifier.

Social Contract Theory: Based on the reasoning of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), right and wrong are based on a set of rules a group sees as moral because they are socially acceptable and benefit all in the society

Virtue Ethics: This theory originated with Aristotle in his *Nichomachean Ethics* (2012), who described these traits as virtues that were born from “commendable” habits (Rachels & Rachels, 2015, p. 161). These virtues were further broken into two categories: Intellectual virtues, which included wisdom and understanding, and moral virtues, which included self-control and generosity.

Limitations

A limitation in this study dealt with the study context. Only one school was asked to participate in the study, which was not the only secondary school in this district that met the criteria of the sampling. This school was selected because of the level to which it met the criteria; particularly, it was the high school with a high minority student population that could be easily accessed. This relates to a limitation of generalizability. The case, or sample, met specific criteria and was studied within a specific context. The context also represented my own intrinsic interest

in understanding teachers' perceptions of student ethics in this urban context and, therefore, cannot be generalized, according to some qualitative research experts (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000). Yin (2014), however, described analytic generalizations in case studies as lessons that were learned from the findings. These analytic generalizations will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Another limitation in this study dealt with bias in the criteria for selecting the school that would be the context of the study. The criteria were general enough to contribute to the literature on African American students, as this was the majority population in this high school and the object of my intrinsic motivation for the study. The cases were then a matter of convenience sampling but were used to obtain rich, meaningful data that answered the research questions. The study could not, therefore, apply to primary schools or rural areas, for example. This bias has been revealed in order to adhere to ethical standards for conducting research (Yin, 2014).

Another form of bias, researcher bias, influences the way the researcher analyzes data or even the choices in shaping the interview questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). As the researcher, my previous experience and interest in this study topic, as described in the *Positionality* section at the beginning of this chapter, subjects the study to bias. To attempt to ensure quality through validity, I have engaged in reflexivity throughout the stages of the study. Savin-Baden and Majors (2013) describe reflexivity as "a process that helps researchers to consider their position and influence during the study" (p. 76). I engaged in reflexivity, in addition to eliciting an external auditor, in order to ensure that the data and findings matched and were not analyzed according to my bias.

In addition, the participants in this study were all white, female teachers. While a more diverse population of participants was desirable, these were the volunteers for the study. In a

future study, done on a larger scale, ensuring a diverse population by gender and race could yield provocative results.

Finally, the study presented a limitation with regard to the time of year data were collected. Teachers journaled and were interviewed in the late fall/early winter. In my experience as a teacher, most relationships with students have been built by this time. The data and findings may have been different had data collection occurred early in the school year or at the end of the school year due to the nature of the teacher-student relationship at these times of year. Variables that may have impact the teacher student relationship included the period at the beginning of the school year, when students and teachers were still forming relationships; any extended break from school, such as winter break or spring break; and standardized testing windows, when the teacher, as test administrator, is not able to interact on a personal level with students as much as other times during the school year. Therefore, while the period during which data collection occurred ensured teachers had an opportunity to establish relationships with their students, those relationships may have changed or looked different depending on the point in the academic year.

Assumptions

One of the assumptions that must be explicit during this study is that teachers have strong opinions of students' use of morals and their ethical reasoning, especially with regards to students who are guilty of multiple rule infractions that interrupt the academic learning in the classroom. Another assumption is that teachers would provide a more authentic view of their perceptions during reflective journaling than during interviews (Ortlipp, 2008). Due to this assumption, participants were interviewed and asked to keep anecdotal journals, and no identifying information was included in this research report to ensure that teachers would share their experiences and perceptions freely. A third assumption is that teachers may have different

opinions regarding student morals and ethics, depending on the student's race. This assumption is addressed in the literature review and was considered in coding data for analysis (Thomas, Coard, Stevenson, Bentley, & Zamel, 2009).

Organization of the Study

Chapter One of this research study report included a thorough account of the experiences that led to this study, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. A description was also included of the local context in which the study was conducted. In addition, terms were defined and assumptions were discussed.

In Chapter Two, the literature relating to the origin of five particular ethical frameworks and moral theories is detailed, which includes consequentialism, respect for agents, virtue theory, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, and Noddings' Ethic of Care. In this chapter, relevant studies in literature are also discussed as they relate to teacher perceptions regarding African American student behavior, morals, and ethics. In addition, Chapter Two contains broad discussion related to the theories that drive the methodology. These are discussed within the context of the study in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three includes the methodology for this study, outlining the research study design, describing the participants, and explaining the theoretical framework on which this study was designed. In this chapter, the data collection and data analysis procedures are also detailed.

After data were collected and analyzed, Chapter Four contains the findings from the data, and Chapter Five contains the discussion of the findings, implications of these findings, and recommendations for further research.

Summary

In studies on teacher perceptions of student behavior, researchers found consistently that teachers' perceptions impact students' future behavior. The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethics in relation to their behavior in the classroom and what implications these perceptions have on the students' behaviors and teacher-student interactions. In Chapter Two, relevant literature on teacher perceptions, African American student behavior, and student ethics and morals are discussed, along with ethical frameworks and moral theories that teachers may inadvertently use in their interactions with students. These studies and moral and ethical structures will be organized into the conceptual framework for the study that will show how teacher perceptions, matched to ethical frameworks or moral theories, can influence teacher-student interactions and how these interactions may impact student behavior.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

According to Krathwohl and Smith (2005), there are two types of literature reviews. One type is a traditional review in which all studies related to the broad field of the current research study are discussed. In the other type of review, the emphasis is not on coverage of the field, but on how certain relevant studies inform the current study or pertain to it, showing the quality of the connections as opposed to the quantity of related studies from the field. For example, this research study contains ethics as a topic; during my review of the many studies in this field, however, I learned these studies were geared toward business ethics or the ethics of the school administrator (Frick, 2011; Gross & Shapiro, 2004; Hughes & Jones, 2010; Pede, 2015; Sun, 2011). Because these studies are not relevant to the specific direction of this study, only a select number of pertinent studies that show quality connections to this study will be discussed in this review. At the suggestion of Krathwohl and Smith (2005), this type of literature review will focus on the contributions to these specific paths of study within the larger field of the study of ethics and morals.

In addition to Krathwohl and Smith's (2005) type of literature review, which is represented in the *Relevant Studies* section, this chapter begins with a history of how the teacher came to be the moral and ethical agent in the classroom. The history has then been traced in America from colonial times, when Puritan principles ruled the towns, to the mid-1900s, when the teacher's role as a moral agent was overshadowed by the importance of modern advances in science and technology. In addition, moral theories and ethical frameworks are outlined as they pertained during data analysis to how teachers perceived students' motivation for their behavior. Five of these constructs have been discussed in this chapter.

First, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development and Nel Noddings' Care Theory are delineated in this chapter. Kohlberg (1981) believed that people move through stages of morality from doing what they are told at the beginning stages to doing what they believe is "right" from a broader, more innate standpoint. Noddings (2003) presented an argument for care in a

relationship between the student and the teacher being paramount to other affective values. To add perspective to these theories and the following ethical frameworks, a brief description of the teacher as a moral and ethical agent is explained.

Along with detailing these moral theories, three ethical frameworks are discussed. Consequentialism is an ethical framework that follows the teachings of John Stuart Mill and his Utilitarianism and offers a belief in the most benefit for the most people (Strike et al., 2005). Another ethical framework, respect for agents, follows the scholarship of Immanuel Kant (1886), who believed that we must make choices based on what we would accept as consequences ourselves. Aristotelian virtue ethics is based on the virtues, or “commendable” habits (Rachels & Rachels, 2015, p. 161) one should adopt in order to live ethically. These ethical frameworks and moral theory provided direction for analyzing the data of teacher perceptions to examine how these perceptions of student behavior could be interpreted through the lenses of one or more of these constructs.

The relevant literature pertaining to teacher perceptions regarding student behavior in relation to moral and ethical reasoning are discussed in this chapter, as well as how race plays a role in behavior and school success. The first section references studies on teacher perceptions and how these studies allow educators to understand which behaviors impede student learning and teacher-student interaction. The next section identifies studies that touch on the effects of teacher perceptions on the behavior of African American students. Researchers who conducted these studies found that African American males are not only suspended and referred to the office at a higher rate than their peers (Irving & Hudley, 2005), but also that research must be conducted to identify ways to combat the negative effects on these students of race bias in teacher perceptions (Llamas, 2012).

The chapter will then close with a detailed discussion of constructivism, pragmatic qualitative research, and case study research, although the specific reasons for the choices in research design are discussed in Chapter Three, along with the remainder of the research methodology and methods.

The Role of the Teacher as the Moral and Ethical Agent: A History

To understand teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethics and even to put my own positionality into historical context, one must understand the beginnings of moral principles in America. According to a detailed history of moral education by McClellan (2005), the teacher did not begin as the keeper and imparter of morality. During colonial times and through the middle of the 18th century, morality was based on the principles of the strictly religious Puritans (McClellan, 2005). During this time, parents were primarily responsible for the moral education of their children. Children were taught proper conduct and Puritan moral principles at home, principles that were supported by societal law that required parents to teach morals for fear of being fined.

After this strict moral development in the 17th and 18th centuries, a sense of stability caused moral education to take on a much more nurturing tone (McClellan, 2005). This mutual morality brought about an acceptance of more childlikeness, where play and occasional disobedience were expected in children. Also during this time period was an expectation that mothers would be responsible for moral educating the children while fathers were in society conducting business (McClellan, 2005). With the mother carrying the primary responsibility for the moral education of the children, gender difference began to emerge with regard to how children were to be moral. Boys were taught to be shrewd and intellectual in order to survive and thrive in society, while girls were expected to show compassion, friendliness, and hospitality (McClellan, 2005). This was the beginning of the shift to the teacher as moral agent as school began to monopolize much of the children's day.

During the mid-19th century into the early 1900s, the gender differences in moral principles caused a contrast that would pour into American schools. "The association between

morality and femininity grew even sharper in this era as the world of business came to be identified as a rough-and-tumble masculine arena” (McClellan, 2005, p. 20). Combining this with the gender preference for the mother to be the moral agent made people prefer female teachers in schools in order to have the teacher as an extension of the moral education from the home. Because of the new opportunities for freedom at this time, morality was expected to be instilled during childhood, which made the female teacher, as the preferred gender for moral agents, even more imperative in the moral development of children who were preparing to take their place in society.

According to McClellan (2005), moral education became second place to the modern societal and technological advances of the mid-20th century. During this time, Dewey brought ethics into view as the new morality, and schools began to encourage ethical reasoning of moral principles, although this seemed to be semantics at its inception. Even today, in order to get as far away from religion in schools as possible, many moral education programs are now called “Character education” and focus on “problem solving and social learning” (McClellan, 2005, p.58). Still, society’s push for schools to support the home in the moral education of children has gone as far in some homes as to allow the responsibility to fall completely on the classroom teacher. According to a United States Department of Education 2012 census of teachers in America, over 75% were female, showing that this expectation for schools to support the moral education of children still lies with women, specifically female teachers.

The Teacher as a Moral and an Ethical Agent

According to Campbell (2003), everything a teacher does has some influence morally and ethically on his or her students, which makes the teacher a moral agent. Moral agency is “a state in which a person considers the interests of others, does not make discriminations on irrelevant

grounds, and has a clear set of principles or virtues in which he or she believes and on which he or she acts” (Sockett as qtd. in Campbell, 2003. p. 2). This moral agency determines how a teacher will act in ethical situations and how he or she perceives the morals and ethical behavior of others. Because of a teacher’s moral agency, what he or she believes to be important for students regarding moral principles is usually the same as the moral values they themselves hold and the behaviors they avoid (Campbell, 2003).

For the “teacher as moral educator” (Campbell, 2003, p. 47), student behavior will elicit a moral or ethical response depending on how the teacher perceives the situation. Brown (2016) found that teachers use their moral value systems to make decisions but that these decisions may involve ethical conflicts for which the teacher was not prepared. The teacher can say, “To me, this is a matter of honesty,” while the student may be acting on a feeling that the situation was a matter of loyalty or another moral principle that may not be easily decided when applied to an ethical dilemma. This will inform how the teacher handles the situation and how the student reacts to the teacher’s interference. Campbell (2003) tells a story of a classroom behavior issue in which she was unaware that the students were from homes of divorce, which had a bearing on the actions of the students. It would be easy for a teacher to perceive these students as wrong or morally unprincipled without the knowledge of the context of their behavior. Studies of how teachers perceive students’ behavior will be discussed in a later section.

Moral Theories and Ethical Frameworks

One can think of ethics as all parties feeling they have made the right decision based on some intrinsic value system. Within this system, or ethical framework, people may rely on particular morals; a person’s morals make up the larger ethical framework or foundation for ethical reasoning when faced with a dilemma (Strike et al., 2005). Likewise, the morals are molded and applied through the lens of the ethical framework. Sometimes, however, our morals

contend with one another (Strike et al., 2005). For example, is it right to be honest? One might say it is if one holds honesty in high moral regard, but does that same individual feel that it is right to be kind? These morals may conflict if one's honesty would result in unkind or hurtful words or actions. This person will then have to rely on his or her broader ethical reasoning to solve this conflict.

Teachers may perceive a student to have behaved immorally; however, the student's moral action may be driven by ethical reasoning unfamiliar to the teacher. This can create a rift in the teacher-student relationship. The following moral theories and ethical frameworks will lay the groundwork for how the data regarding teacher perceptions will be analyzed.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

During the time in history when schools were encouraging ethical reasoning over moral principles, Lawrence Kohlberg came on the scene with an answer to keeping virtues out of education without completely sacrificing moral discussion. Kohlberg believed that to be moral was to hold certain universal principles for decision making (McClellan, 2005); this idea would be the basis for ethical reasoning through his stages of moral development.

In his book on the stages of moral development, Kohlberg (1981) offers six stages of moral thinking in adolescents:

- Stage 1: The Punishment and Obedience Orientation
- Stage 2: The Instrumental Relativist Orientation
- Stage 3: The Interpersonal Concordance Orientation
- Stage 4: Society Maintaining Orientation
- Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation
- Stage 6: The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

Kohlberg grouped these stages by twos, with each two having their own label. Stages 1-2 are the pre-conventional stages. Stages 3-4 are categorized as conventional, and the last two stages are considered post-conventional.

At the preconventional level, children do what they are told is right for fear of getting in trouble. In this level, Stage 1 deals with only acting morally in order to avoid physical punishment (Kohlberg, 1981). Children acting in this stage have no value for virtues or others; they merely act out of a fear of sorts and an avoidance. In Stage 2, Instrumental Exchange, children act morally out of purely selfish intentions (Kohlberg, 1981). They do what they must or even should in order to get something from another person. This is a give-take stage.

At the conventional level, the stages deal with acting morally out of a duty to others (Kohlberg, 1981). This may be in accordance with family values or school rules, but people in these stages will do as they should to maintain their place in the social group. Stage 3, Interpersonal Concordance, deals with the people-pleaser moralist (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 18). These children act morally to gain the approval of others (Kohlberg, 1981). The next stage, Society Maintaining, is characterized by doing what is considered right by the authority in society as a way to maintain order (Kohlberg, 1981).

The third level, the post-conventional level, deals with one adopting his or her own moral principles apart from authority or duty to others or a group (Kohlberg, 1981). In an effort to shift from the conventional to the post-conventional, Stage 5, the Social Contract stage, allows for this transition through morality according to what one personally believes to be promoting the good of society. The values in this stage are not decided by an authority but are validated by laws (Kohlberg, 1981). The last stage, Universal Ethical Principle, is the complex internalization of

moral values, where one does not have to be told it is right or wrong to do a certain thing but is able to apply moral concepts to behaviors in order to determine what is right (Kohlberg, 1981).

Kohlberg believed that students move through these stages in order, never skipping a stage to go to a higher one. In addition, he believed that children will not remain 100% in one stage before passing to the next (Kohlberg, 1981); children straddle stages as they are developing. McClellan (2005) asserted that teachers, acting as moral educators, could help children move through and reach higher stages of moral development more quickly by staging situations and scenarios in which ethical reasoning would have to be employed to solve dilemmas. Consequently, teachers may perceive students to be situated in one stage, when, in fact, the student may be operating out of the percentage of moral reasoning that is in a higher or lower stage of development.

Noddings' Care Theory

A second moral theory to be considered in the discussion of teacher perceptions of student morality is Care Theory by Nel Noddings. The teacher as moral agent has come full circle with this theory in promoting a more nurturing and feminine way of helping students make moral and ethical decisions, drawing on the notion in the 19th century that women were the preferred moral agents (McClellan, 2005). Care in this theory means “[having] regard or inclination toward...something or someone” (Noddings, 2003, p.9). As Care Theory calls for a relationship, there are two people in this caring relationship: the one-caring and the cared-for (Noddings, 2003). There must be an openness to give and to receive the caring for the caring relationship to work effectively. If one is closed off or aloof, the caring cannot take place. For instance, as much as the one-caring wants to be engaged and show interest in the cared-for, if the

cared-for is not open to the caring, the care dialogue does not occur (Noddings, 2003). In this case, the one-caring may feel rejected and cease caring after several attempts to care.

For the one-caring, there has to be empathy to receive the message that care is needed. Noddings likens this experience to a mother when her baby cries. She receives a nonverbal message from the baby of the need for one-caring and responds accordingly and naturally. This is the feminine approach of natural caring, although Noddings is careful not to exclude males in this ability to care naturally.

For the cared-for, there has to be a receptiveness for the one-caring. The one-caring will convey an attitude of caring to the cared-for that will be accepted or rejected based on how the one-caring acts on the need of the cared-for. This makes sense in accordance with Gary Chapman's (1995) five love languages because we show we care by the attitude of using the other person's love language when we are the one-caring. If we do this, the cared-for readily recognizes the one-caring as loving/caring by the language that she uses. For example, imagine a student's primary love language is gifts. If the teacher offers a small token, a pencil or special notebook perhaps, this gesture would show care to the student more clearly than affirming words from the teacher, which might be viewed as kindness rather than genuine care.

If the one-caring is received by the cared-for, this is called confirmation. Receiving the one-caring is the reciprocal process of caring that must take place for the caring relationship to continue (Noddings, 2003). When the cared-for shows the one-caring confirmation, the one-caring feels as a cared-for in return.

Noddings (2003) suggests that care theory in schools must be put into action through three elements. First is the element of *dialogue*. This is a relationship that is open to discussion of whatever is in the child's interest. If the child's interests are ignored, the cared-for does not

perceive the actions of the one-caring. Noddings (2003) explains that this dialogue includes “talking, listening, sharing, and responding” (p. 186). The second element of Care Theory in schools is *practice*. Schools must nurture caring through various activities that allow students to participate in practicing caring, whether it be to other students, to teachers, or to their environment (Noddings, 2003). Lastly, the previously mentioned element of *confirmation* must be included. In the student-teacher relationship, the student must see the teacher as the one-caring and the cared-for in order to learn the way of caring. For this reason, teachers must accept student caring and receive it graciously and gratefully in order to confirm the student as the one-caring. In turn, the teacher must also take on the role of the one-caring in order to provide opportunities for the student to show confirmation. The teacher may even prompt the student to confirm her empathy as the one-caring.

“[Students] can sense when teachers genuinely care about them; they can sniff out hypocrisy in a flash, and they are alert to differences between the supercilious and the authentic” (Campbell, 2003, p. 23-24). To care and to nurture while being a moral agent and educator creates a model for what teachers would like students to be and how they would like students to act in social situations.

Consequentialism

Consequentialism was born out of Utilitarianism and has also been referred to as benefit maximization (Strike et al., 2005). Champions of this ethical code, Bentham and Mill, believed in the *Principle of Utility*, which asserted that the moral decision that should be made is the one that makes the most people happy because happiness is regarded above all (Rachels & Rachels, 2015). Strike et al. (2005) describe this framework as decision making that benefits the majority of people.

In his opening remarks on Utilitarianism, Mill (1863) claimed that knowing right and wrong, or being moral, is not something that can be sensed in a particular dilemma. Knowing what is right has to be reasoned from some set of ideals because reasoning is not a sense like our other physical senses. Instead, Mill defined the principle in this way:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure. (pp. 9-10)

Mill goes on to explain that the Principle of Utility regards mental pleasure over physical pleasure. For example, if one was faced with engaging in acts that may cause an immediate physical pleasure, such as gluttony or sex, but would cause guilt and angst later, the moral choice would be to abstain because the mental pleasure of the absence of guilt would take precedence over the physical pleasure of the act.

In addition to mental over physical pleasure, Mill (1863) stresses quality over quantity, but this may be misleading from a utilitarian perspective. He explains that, when given the choice between two pleasures, whichever one is preferred by the most people is the one that holds the highest quality, regardless of its characteristics; thus, quantity gives name to quality. One final significant feature of this framework is that no person is regarded over another. This means that one could not show loyalty to a child or spouse in decision making over that of a stranger; this also purports that one cannot regard his or her own happiness above the happiness of another (Mill, 1863). This Principle of Utility, in its entirety, is what Mill calls “the standard of morality...the rules and precepts for human conduct” (p. 17).

One problem with this theory is that it does not give thought to how minorities may be treated from a social justice stance. Civil rights would be an irrelevant idea if consequentialism were the moral code by which society and schooling operated. Let us now imagine that a teacher held this as his or her ethical framework and perceived this to be the best way to deal with the behavior of his or her students. What may that teacher believe to be the students' morality if that teacher perceives the students' morality through this lens? The same questions must be asked of each of the remaining ethical frameworks. In addition, if a teacher perceives his or her students to be operating out of this framework, the teacher may erroneously ignore how race and justice interact, which will be discussed in a later section.

Respect for Agents

Respect for agents is likened by Strike et al. (2005) as most closely related to the Golden Rule. When faced with a moral decision or choice, we must make the choice that we would want made for us in the same situation. If respect for agents is our moral framework, we must treat each person as an individual, as human, with no alternate lens. This means that all would be equal and receive equal treatment regardless of gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, or any other cultural identifier. Rachels and Rachels (2015) claim that Immanuel Kant, originator of this framework, felt as though humans, being the only "animal" that can feel and have goals, were all equal and should be the only beings treated with moral respect. From a curriculum standpoint, this appears on the surface to be supported by critical inquiry; however, Kant would argue the notion of "colorblindness" and equality over equity in this type of schooling, which does not support the differentiation that is necessary in education. Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) warned against this in dealing with African American students and their moral decision making, which will be discussed later.

Kant believed in universal principles of morality and has, therefore, come under scrutiny for reducing the concept of morality as not to allow for deliberation (Noddings & Slote, 2003). In his *Metaphysics of Ethics*, Kant (1886) disparaged reason, claiming “reason is insufficient to guide the Will so as to obtain adequate objects of enjoyment and the satisfaction of all our wants, and innate instinct would have reached this end more effectually” (p. 16). Kant later seemed to concede to the idea of reason in ethics asserting that reason was so commonplace and innate in the realm of morality that one could hardly avoid it. In earnest, when viewing a moral dilemma from a Kantian framework, one must reason what it is he or she would be most apt to accept as satisfactory if the dilemma’s consequences were to fall to him or her directly instead of the other party.

Aristotelian Virtue Theory

Virtue ethics calls for an inventory of traits that makes a person “good.” This theory originated with Aristotle in his *Nichomachean Ethics* (2012), who describes these traits as virtues that are born from “commendable” habits (Rachels & Rachels, 2015, p. 161). According to Aristotle (in Cahn, 2009), a virtue is defined “[not as] excellence of the body but [excellence] of the soul” (p. 112). These virtues are further broken into two categories: intellectual virtues, which include wisdom and understanding, and moral virtues, which include self-control and generosity. Possibly controversially, one could contend that Kant dabbled in virtue ethics for education when he identified obedience, truthfulness, and friendliness as three values that should be taught to all children in schools in his *Lectures on Pedagogy* (in Cahn, 2009).

This framework is difficult to marry with students and curriculum as a whole when we view the individual virtues. Of course, we want students to be “good.” Goodness can take forms that the other frameworks do not allow, such as equity; however, do we want students to be

honest all the time? Can the content be too honest for the developmental age of the child? Or can honesty cause hurt feelings? Would we want to promote loyalty to family or friends over abiding by the law or rules and procedures in the school? These questions should be considered if one claims to hold this ethical framework for decision making.

Relevant Studies

In this section, studies on the topics of teacher perceptions, student behavior, and student ethics and morals will be discussed. Due to the majority demographic of the school that is the context for this case study, special attention will be paid to studies involving African American high school students.

Teacher Perceptions Regarding Student Behavior

Many studies dealing with how teachers perceive students' behavior have used quantitative methodologies. These studies, however, do not examine teachers' perceptions about why students are misbehaving; rather, they deal with what specific behaviors teachers perceive to be the most troublesome to learning and to escalating behavior issues in the classroom. Conley and colleagues (2014) from Brigham Young University identified teachers' perceptions regarding behavior characteristics of emotionally and behaviorally disturbed students and their perceived levels of severity. Teachers were asked which behaviors seemed most disruptive during instruction and which most adversely affected positive classroom interactions. Similarly, a New Zealand study found that teachers believe harsh language and bullying to precede most aggressive student behaviors, including fighting, which, in most cases, leads to office referrals and loss of learning time (Marsh, Williams, & McGee, 2009). What then precedes the bullying and harsh language? Only when educators discover this can they begin to take the steps to improve the school environment in order to meet the needs of all students.

In a study of Catholic school teachers, Mucci (2014) found that teachers did not believe the religious nature of the school played as large a role as one may think in affecting student behavior. Teachers in the study felt that students came to school with already established moral values and that teachers could not make students adopt the teacher's own morals. The teachers reported, however, that the nature of a Catholic school set an expectation for students and gave them a sense of being "cared for" (p. 9). Mucci also found that teachers perceived their responses to student behavior to heavily influence future behavior. Teachers cared and showed this by taking time to discuss behaviors with students privately to train students in how to better respond in behavior-related situations. This training would indicate that instruction in some type of ethical or moral framework, described in detail earlier in this chapter, would be beneficial for students.

Not only is it important to understand which behaviors are the most problematic, what causes the negative behaviors, and how knowing a student's moral base can affect the student's behavior, but also knowing how teachers perceive their role in the student-teacher relationship can also impact student behavior. Poulou (2009) conducted a survey of Greek students' and teachers' perceptions regarding their interactions in the classroom and found that these perceptions were not well-researched or documented. The purpose of this study was "to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions of social and emotional skills implementation in their classrooms" (p. 103). For my study, I concentrated instead on the moral and ethical values that are the foundation of the student-teacher relationship through the teachers' perceptions. Myers and Pianta (2008) found that student behavior was directly related to the teacher-student relationship, although some teachers do not believe this to be true (Modlin, 2008). Rather, some teachers place the responsibility for the success of the student on the student and their family, or

how they were raised (Lynn et al., 2010). Future research should include student perceptions of moral and ethical values that relate to student behavior and the student-teacher relationship.

African American Student Behavior

The studies by Thomas and colleagues (2009), Meehan et al. (2003), Llamas (2012), and Roderick (2003) are particularly significant to my research study as they create the tie between teacher perceptions of African American students and the behavior of these students. Thomas and colleagues (2009) conducted a study measuring the effect of teacher perceptions of behavior on African American male students in secondary school but say these perceptions are rarely studied. In this quantitative study of 148 students, findings showed that students acted negatively if they perceived racial bias in teacher perceptions of their behavior. Interestingly, Llamas (2012) found that teacher perceptions were strongly influenced by student demographics, particularly as it relates to which demographics that teachers respect. The researchers also found that these students might be showing anger as a defense mechanism against these negative or racially biased teacher perceptions. These findings indicate that student misbehavior can be the result of negative teacher perceptions although the researchers are not claiming that this is always the case.

Meehan et al. (2003) conducted a study of 140 elementary students to examine student-teacher relationships involving aggressive students and found that the correlation was stronger with African American students. They also found that African American students are being suspended at a higher rate than their other-racial peers. The researchers suggest that a deeper cultural understanding will lead to better relationships and better behavior. This is supported by Tyler et al. (2010), who found that the home-school dissonance, or the disconnect between what

students learn at home and what is expected of them at school, particularly student's value system (Gay, 2000), predicted poor behavior.

These studies show a connection between the behavior of African American students and how their teachers perceive them. If the best case scenario would be to have all teachers understand their African American students' behavior, what must first happen, according to Prochaska and DiClemente's (1992) *Stages of Change*, is a time of contemplation, characterized by an emerging awareness of a need. My study hopes to illuminate teacher perceptions as a possible awareness of the need to influence student misbehavior. This, then, paves the way for future research that could deal with improving teacher perceptions and, therefore, student behavior.

Thomas et al. (2009) asserted that future studies must explicate the perceptions of teachers regarding student behavior that may include bias with reference to race, as this is an indicator of negative student reactions and student-teacher relationships in the classroom. In addition, they called for an identification of effective strategies to assist African American students in obeying the rules of the classroom and suggested that cultural training for teachers of African American males would be beneficial since teachers can be guilty of bringing their own biases into the classroom. If teachers understood the causes of aggressiveness and misbehavior, the relationship and, consequently, students' behavior may improve.

African American Ethics and Morals

According to Urban and Wagoner (2014), the Civil Rights Act of 1964 contained a clause that would allow the government to withhold funding to schools who still segregated, which may have been the only motivation for some schools to desegregate. At that time, African American parents wanted to preserve the type of nurturing for their children to which they were

accustomed in segregated schools (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004) but still wanted to have equal funding as the desegregated schools. They never imagined that they would have both care and justice when it came to education for their children. This historical account lays the groundwork for the type of school environment that African American students still expect. When this does not happen, African American students have difficulties transitioning to high school (Benner & Graham, 2009) and have difficulties forming positive relationships with teachers, which would help these students experience more academic success (Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008).

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) assert that the critical perspective must be recognized and integrated into school policy in order to reach African American students, who seek both justice and care in schools, not preferring one over the other (p. 6). If this justice is not recognized, students are often motivated to behave badly or in a way counter to the rules of the academic institution (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). This behavior comes from a need for safety and survival, even if that is just related to the survival of their home culture (Dyer, 2014; Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) also claim, however, that we cannot succumb to the idea of “colorblindness” (p. 24) because, in doing so, we are perpetuating the societal norms that originally established the inequitable ideals in our society and in our schools. Roberts (2010) supports this assertion in her study regarding how African American teachers define care for their African American students. This study revealed that African American teachers talk freely with their African American students about issues related to race and what the students will face when they try to “navigate the underpinnings of racist American society” (p. 460). In addition, Kang (2006) found that there was a distinct difference in the way teachers think of, or define, care based on their race, whether White, Black, or Korean. The findings in Chapter Four of my

study support both Roberts' and Kang's study with regard to the way teachers of various races define and enact care to students of a different race, which will be explained further in Chapter Five.

Conceptual Framework

The previous frameworks and studies will serve as the conceptual framework for my study. According to Savin-Baden and Majors (2013), the conceptual framework shows how the relevant studies and other research fit together to inform the current study.



Figure 2. Conceptual Framework derived from the literature review. Citations available in References section.

In this conceptual framework, teacher perceptions collected during interviews and anecdotal journaling were fed through the lenses of the ethical frameworks and moral theories discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. These frameworks and theories include Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, Noddings' Care Theory, Mill's Consequentialism (Benefit Maximization), Kant's Golden Rule (Respect for Agents), and Aristotle's Virtue Theory. The

frameworks and theories act as lenses for data analysis as data will be coded using these structures as descriptive codes, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. The teachers' perceptions, viewed through the moral or ethical lens, will then be analyzed for their implications in the classroom in relation to student behavior and the teacher-student interaction. According to the literature in Chapter Two, these perceptions may influence the teacher-student interaction (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). I examined what the perceptions were; matched them to an ethical framework or moral theory, if a match existed; and attempted to investigate how teachers felt the perceptions impacted their interactions with students. In support of relevant literature (Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thomas et al., 2003), I was also able to see how the nature of these interactions influenced student behavior in the classroom and toward the teacher, which was added to the conceptual framework after data analysis.

It is important to note here that the participants did not have knowledge of the particular ethical frameworks and moral theories prior to or during data collection. This was intentional and would have represented a limitation with regard to their honesty and authenticity during data collection had they gained previous instruction on the lenses through which I would be feeding the data. Knowing the ethical frameworks and moral theories before the interview or journaling could have caused the participants to choose the one with which they most agreed and provide answers and journal entries situated within that framework or theory.

Summary

As discussed in this literature review, how teachers feel about the motivation for student behavior can impact how students behave in the future. This is especially true for African American students, who view incorrect perceptions as injustices and as a lack of care on the part of the teacher. In order to understand the specific perceptions teachers have regarding the morals

of students, further research needs to be conducted. Chapter Three outlines the research design and rationale for the methodology chosen for this research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the details of the research study. Included in this chapter is the research design, description of the participants, and data collection and analysis procedures. In addition, the context of the study will be detailed, as well as methods to ensure validity.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethical frameworks in relation to classroom behaviors and the implications for these perceptions on how teachers interact with their students. Through this study, I examined how teachers interacted with their students in behavior-related situations with relation to their own and their perceptions of their students' ethical frameworks and moral theories.

The following research questions provide the basis for this research study:

1. How do high school teachers perceive underlying morals and ethics of their students?
2. How do teacher perceptions of their students' morals and ethics influence teacher-student interactions?
3. What other implications for the classroom, if any, are implicit in these teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics?

Research Design

According to Yin (2014), a case can include "decisions...individuals...processes" (p. 15). I chose qualitative case study research for this study because what I studied, individuals, could not be separated from the context in which I conducted the study. If separated from the context, the study could not be conducted as it stands, which is discussed in more detail below. Data collection procedures also denoted this reasoning.

Merriam (1998) explained that one type of case study, *heuristic*, is when the case "illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 30). She went on to say that a heuristic case study would "explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why" (p. 31). This is what I attempted to do with my study, which is why I believe it to be a case study. My study hoped to reveal teacher perceptions regarding student ethics and morals, and, as is the nature of heuristic case study research, to allow other information to emerge as the data were collected and analyzed. This study also employed a pragmatic qualitative approach, which, according to Savin-Baden and Majors (2013), is interpretive and flexible and focuses on phenomena, such as individuals. The individuals in my study were the teachers and my phenomena, their perceptions of student ethics and morals.

The cases in this multiple-case study were the high school teachers that were interviewed for the study from a particular high school in a Midwest school district. Merriam (1998) describes a case as something or someone in which the researcher is interested or about which the researcher has some concern. Merriam also asserts that a case does not have to be chosen because of its intrinsic interest to the researcher; rather, a case can be chosen because it provides an instance of the phenomenon that is of intrinsic interest to the researcher (p. 28). The cases chosen for this study were within the context, the high school in the Midwest, of an exemplary instance in which the phenomenon of teacher perceptions of student morality through the lens of race, particularly African American students, can be studied. In this case, the participants could not be separated from the context because cases provided rich data to answer the research questions and point to the study being explicated through moral/ethical and racial lenses. Any teacher in any high school would not be effective in supporting the significance of the study, as

the cases were requested purposefully as being within the context, an exemplary instance of the phenomenon of interest.

Context of the Study

This study was situated within an urban school district in the Midwest in one of their high schools during the fall/winter of the 2016-2017 school year. I chose this particular context for my case study after teaching in an urban school corporation for five years. This experience was where I first started to feel the dissonance between my own value system from my childhood and the value systems presented to me by students. This dissonance raised questions regarding the nature of right and wrong, how students make these decisions, and how my beliefs about their value systems affected them, if at all. In particular, I found that students made different decisions in ethical dilemmas based on some inner value, although I could not identify what the inner values were or if my beliefs about their morals influenced how they acted. The semester chosen was out of convenience and timing. In order to complete my dissertation study during a school year and not have to try to interview teachers during their summer break, I had to complete data collection during the fall semester.

Participants

Participants, or the cases, were high school teachers in an urban high school in Midwest School District. Teachers were asked through email if they would be willing to participate in the study after the study's purpose and data collection methods had been detailed for them. They were given researcher contact information and asked to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating by a predetermined date. Those who agreed to participate were then given the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and asked to sign the form after they had been given the opportunity to ask any clarifying questions concerning their participation in the

study. In order to manage the data collected, cases were limited to ten or fewer. Five teachers volunteered, but one had to withdraw before interviews were conducted due to personal obligations that conflicted with the interview timeline. I knew two of the participants from my time teaching in the district, and the other two participants were acquaintances.

Access to the site

The school district for this study required a simple process for conducting research. I had one phone conversation with the research director for the district, who then let me know that approval would have to be granted from the principal of the site school instead of at the district level when conducting research in one school building. After this discussion, I contacted the high school principal by email (see Appendix A), explaining my study and asking for permission to conduct my study at Midwest High School. The research implementation plan was described, and the principal was asked if I could elicit interested participants from his faculty, which I did through email. Initially, five participants volunteered, but one had to withdraw because of personal commitments. Once participants volunteered and signed the informed consent, I began data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

Yin (2014) described six possible sources of evidence for data collection in the case study protocol; I used two of these sources of evidence: documentation and interviews. Data collection began to inform the design of the study in that each high school in the chosen district was researched to determine which high schools contained a minority student population equal to the percentage of minority students in the district using public data on the state department of education website. This was done in order to ensure that the teachers solicited for participation in the study would be a representative sampling of the population with perceptions toward high

school student ethics and morals regarding behavior in a school setting similar to the one in which I taught.

After this first phase was completed, a school was chosen that represented one of the highest percentages of minority student population in the district and that was a public school. After explaining the study to the teaching staff at this school, I asked for interested parties to contact me through email, which the five participants did that initially volunteered. The participants were then asked to sign the informed consent, after which time I set an agreed upon time for the first interview (see Appendix C). This interview took no more than 2.5 hours and was conducted at the place of the participants' choosing. All participants chose local restaurants for the locations of the interviews.

Before departing from that first interview, participants were given the option to use a print journal, flash drive, or shared Google Drive in order to record anecdotal information, as it occurred, regarding their perceptions of student morality during behavior issues. Teachers were asked to record stories and perceptions, as well as, answer the prompts written in the journal directions (see Appendix D). As Yin (2014) pointed out, this kind of documentation as data can be especially helpful as it allows the participants to be specific to the details of the events as they are happening. This is important for this study in that teachers needed to record their honest and authentic perceptions (Ortlipp, 2008). The journals were also used for triangulation as this helped the researcher to match data from the journals and the interviews (Yin, 2014).

All data gathered during this project, specifically interview transcriptions and journals, were maintained as confidential and no identifying information, such as participants' names and names of other individuals the participants may mention, including their organization and geographic location, appeared in transcriptions, narratives used in the analysis, or the dissertation

final presentation and report. All names were generalized to a region (i.e. Midwest School District), and pseudonyms were chosen for all participants and any students mentioned during interviews and/or journaling. Furthermore, with the participants' permission and for the purpose of accuracy, each interview was recorded by an iPhone 6 using a digital recording application. Before the interviews were transcribed, the researcher uploaded the interviews onto a personal, fingerprint-protected laptop, and the original recordings were erased from the iPhone. The researcher then paid a transcriber to transcribe the interviews. The print anecdotal journals were number coded so that identifying information was not used on the artifact for the protection of the participant. Digital journals had number codes added to the flash drive. If the participants wished to use a shared document with the researcher through Google Drive, the researcher committed not to link the shared information with any identifying information in the final report.

Every effort was made to secure the participants' journals, including selecting unique login credentials for Google services and keeping all folders and files private or only shared with the participant, which was the only way to access accounts and applications in Google. Due to a security scare in 2015, all Google account passwords were reset and additional security measures were implemented, including using HTTPS, which is a secure encryption, for all applications and periodically running security protocols that would reveal questionable account activity (Winder, 2016). "As for your data itself, this is encrypted in transit...from your device and also between Google data centers" (para. 17). The researcher downloaded the *HTTPS Everywhere* application to Google Chrome on her personal computer, where Google Drive was regularly accessed for the purpose of this study. This application further encrypts websites for an added layer of security. The Google Drive secure folder that contained data from this study was never accessed from a public or work computer. This information was also included in the informed consent.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed using descriptive and pattern coding and thematic analysis. Both Yin (2014) and Merriam (1998) suggest analyzing data and collecting data simultaneously. This means that I was analyzing the first participant interview before I had conducted the other interviews or before the participants completed their journaling. The coding used for this study to make sense of the data was descriptive coding, defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as “attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text” (p. 57). Data were coded according to the specific ethical frameworks and moral theories discussed in the literature review. Ethical frameworks were added to the literature review and codes as they emerged from the data.

As discussed in the *Conceptual Framework* section in Chapter Two, the participants did not know the particular ethical frameworks and moral theories prior to or during the interviews and journaling. I made this decision intentionally, as their prior knowledge of the ethical frameworks and moral theories would have represented a limitation of the study with regard to participants’ honesty and authenticity during data collection. Knowing the ethical frameworks and moral theories before the interview or journaling could have caused the participants to choose the one with which they most agreed and provide answers and journal entries situated within that framework or theory.

In addition to descriptive coding, pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was also used to identify themes and relationships in the data. These patterns were analyzed using the research questions, which inherently sought the relationship between teacher perceptions and the teacher-student relationship. The initial list of descriptive codes was provided (see Appendix E). After all data were coded, thematic analysis was used on the data, which, according to Savin-Baden and Majors (2013), allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with the data.

Finally, a cross-case analysis was added to Chapter Four to show consistencies in the data from all participants.

Validity

Three methods were used to support the validity of this research study. Before discussing these methods, it is important to note that member checking, or allowing the participants to review the interpretation of the findings in order to verify accuracy (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013), was offered. All participants declined as their schedules were not conducive to this time commitment. In addition to the time commitment, participants expressed a trust in the interpretations of the researcher and did not feel verification was necessary.

First, triangulation was employed by gathering data from multiple sources (Merriam, 1998), including multiple participants, or data sources (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013); multiple interviews per participant; and documentation analysis of the journals the participants completed after the first interview. The first interview was semi-structured and offered data on the participants' value systems, their ethical reasoning, and their perceptions of students by demographic. These data were triangulated with the journal entries and the second interview, which was structured, to ensure that the data from all three points confirmed one another. The perceptions in the first interview showed, in real time, in how the teachers described interacting with students in the journal entries. The participants then discussed these interactions reflectively in interview two and supported their thought processes during behavior-related interactions with students. The results of triangulation of the data are discussed in the cross-case analysis and discussion sections in the following chapters.

The second method employed to support the validity of this research study was “clarifying the researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of

the study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Researcher bias has been discussed previously in the following sections: *Positionality, Assumptions, and Constructivism*. In order to ensure that my own theoretical and epistemological views and biases did not skew the findings, I made these transparent in Chapter One, where I also discussed the use of reflexivity, which is the use of a consistent checkpoint during the research process to ensure that I remained as objective as possible throughout design, data collection, and data analysis of the study.

Finally, the research study was further validated using an external audit, which is a strategy that calls for a party outside of the research study and with no personal connection to the researcher to review the methods used and the analyses to “ensure findings and interpretations are supported by data” (Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013, p. 478). The external auditor was a research expert at a Midwest state education department. She was an experienced researcher, who had done her own doctoral work in qualitative case study research, which made her familiar with the methodology in order to accurately validate the research design. In addition, this auditor read the research study to verify that the findings were coming directly from the data and that I was being reflexive enough to avoid skewed interpretations.

Research Implementation Plan

The research proposal was submitted and defended in the summer of 2016. After successfully defended, the researcher submitted the proposal for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. With IRB approval obtained, the participant selection process began in the fall of the 2016-2017 school year and continued through the winter months. Data collection began as soon as participants were selected and informed consent forms were signed. Data were collected through January of 2017, with data analysis completed in April 2017. Writing this final report took place during the spring semester of 2017.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS: FOUR CASE STUDIES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers' perceptions of students' morals and ethical frameworks in relation to classroom behaviors and the implications for these perceptions on how teachers interact with their students. Data collected for this research study focused on how the teachers viewed their students' values and what effect those perceptions had on the teacher-student relationship. The data collected, therefore, should answer the research questions presented in Chapter One:

1. How do high school teachers perceive underlying morals and ethics of their students?
2. How do teacher perceptions of their students' morals and ethics influence teacher-student interactions?
3. What other implications for the classroom, if any, are implicit in these teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics?

During my interviews with the four participants for this case study, I asked questions about their own moral and ethical values to which each participant provided extensive background information that acted as the foundation for the remainder of the interview questions. The interview then included a section describing moral and ethical dilemmas and asked the participants to analyze the situation through his or her own value system. Lastly, participants were asked directly to describe their experiences with and perceptions of students from differing demographics. Before my current position, I was a teacher for over ten years, some of which were in their school district, so I could relate to many of the classroom experiences described by

the participants and knew all of them before they volunteered for the study. This made the interviews comfortable for both of us to mutually share and deepen the conversation.

I analyzed the data using descriptive coding first, identifying places in the transcripts where each of the ethical frameworks and moral theories were represented, as well as when a value system was discussed that did not have a prescribed descriptive code. New codes were created as these value systems emerged from the data. One code that emerged consistently was Social Contract Theory, which will be discussed in this chapter and the next. Other common codes that emerged were moral motivators, teachers' roles, definitions, and justice. These are represented in the table below.

The participants were not informed of the ethical frameworks and moral theories I used for coding the data at any time before, during, or after the study. This decision was made intentionally to avoid any reason for interview and journal data not being honest and authentic. Knowing the ethical frameworks and moral theories before the interview or journaling could have caused the participants to choose the one with which they most agreed and provide answers and journal entries situated within that framework or theory.

After data were coded descriptively, I used pattern coding to find relationships and commonalities within the data and reported these at the end of this chapter in a cross-case analysis. The final code list is represented in the table below. Finally, the data were analyzed in order to extrapolate themes that would fit within the parameters of the research questions. How the findings answer the research questions is discussed in Chapter Five.

Table 2

Final List of Descriptive and Pattern Codes

<u>Descriptive Codes</u>		
Master Codes		
	EF	Ethical Framework
	MT	Moral Theory
	DMP	Moral perception related to a demographic characteristic
	Motiv	Age
		Safety
		Survival
		Guilt
		Disappointment
	T. Role	Awareness
		Direct Instruction
		Support
	Morals Defined	
	Ethics Defined	
Subcodes		
	EF-CS	Consequentialism
	EF-RA	Respect for Agents
	EF-VE	Virtue Ethics
	EF-ALT	Alternate ethical framework
	MT-MD	Stages of Moral Development
	MT-CT	Care Theory
		Justice
	EF - SCT	Social Contract Theory
Pattern Codes		
	Motiv	Moral Motivators for student behavior
	T.Role	Teachers' Role in moral education
	Perception	Direct teacher perception
		Home (Perception about students' home life)

The participants for this case study were all White and female. They all taught in the same high school although they did not all teach the same content area. Participants ranged in age from their 20s to mid-50s and had taught collectively for over 50 years. I met with the participants at local restaurants of their choosing, and we discussed the interview questions and topics while having a meal. I estimated that each interview would last 60 to 90 minutes; however, only two of the interviews stayed within that time frame, the shortest being 65 minutes and the longest lasting 2.5 hours, which had to be conducted over the course of two meetings.

This chapter will reveal what I discovered about the participants' own moral and ethical values and their perceptions of their students' moral and ethical values. The findings in this chapter are arranged first by participant, or case, thematically, as the themes relate to the research questions, and then in a cross-case analysis focusing on themes. Each participant was given a pseudonym that would protect her identity. Careful consideration was given to the pseudonyms I chose so that neither the participants' title nor the sound and letters of their name could be matched to the specific participant findings. Notice that names correspond with the first four letters of the alphabet.

After the case, or participant pseudonym, the findings are arranged according to their definitions of morals and ethics, where they learned morals and ethics with specific examples of the values, examples and experiences with student behavior and the participants' responses to that behavior, and other direct perceptions expressed about the students' morality or ethical values, which follows the interview questions, as well as the conceptual framework. Finally, a cross-case analysis will be presented that describes the findings by the themes that emerged during data collection and analysis and spanned multiple participants. Findings in this chapter support the literature discussed in Chapter Two on how teacher-student interactions influence

student behavior toward that teacher (Mucci, 2014; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Thomas, et al., 2009). All of the data presented in this chapter are from the initial, semi-structured interview (see Appendix C) unless otherwise noted.

Case 1: Ms. Anson

Ms. Anson has been teaching for over 20 years, most of which have been in the Midwest School District. She did teach in one other school district previously. She has taught all high school grade levels and academic ability levels from inclusion to honors students. She has also been teaching summer school for many years. I met Ms. Anson at a small diner in the downtown area of the Midwest City, and we had breakfast and lite conversation before the interview, which then lasted a little over an hour. The pre-interview conversation allowed the participant to become comfortable during the interview. Ms. Anson is a seasoned teacher and provided many insights that were unique to her interview. I thought she, a veteran teacher, would hold a strict view of all things moral throughout the course of the interview, but I found myself surprised more than once at the flexibility she showed while describing her experiences with students in her classroom and in the hallways of the school.

Defining Morals and Ethics

In order to understand how participants viewed the morals and ethics of their students, I had to first understand how they defined those terms and what background experiences may have shaped the participants' perceptions of morality and ethics relating to students. When I asked Ms. Anson how she defined the terms, *morals* and *ethics*, she gave a detailed response that showed how she perceived the two to be distinct from one another. "Morals, to me, are a person's inner guidelines for what is right or wrong...what guides their conscience," guidelines she believed came from religion, family values, or society. She went on to further explain that morals

determine whether or not a person feels guilt for his or her behavior, although people do not “always behave according to their morals.” I pressed further, from her comment referring morals to a single person’s idea of right versus wrong, to see if she thought that morals were then universal. She explained, “I think this applies to everyone, and I even think small children are developing...a sense of right or wrong.” From this explanation, I saw her beliefs being grounded in age-appropriateness. Small children, she said, were *developing*, which, I believe, means that she does not think small children can possess mature and deeper levels of moral understanding. She goes on to affirm this conclusion, which will be discussed in the next section.

In contrast, Ms. Anson saw ethics as a concept that was not as personal nor as universal as morals.

Ethics to me is a more educated view. I don’t think young people really have developed ethics. I think that’s more of an educated view of professional guidelines or respecting the other person’s moral behavior so as not to compromise them. Not the same thing as morals at all but a sense of right or wrong that is not just in the workplace...guidelines for respectful behavior or professional behavior.

This perception is understandable in light of the ethics policies in the workplace, which may be the only time some people hear about ethics, using that term. In the school district where Ms. Anson teaches, the results of a cursory web search yielded ethics mentioned in a senior capstone course related to law, the ethics of the Board of Education, and ethics relating to their educational policies for technology use. On the district website, the superintendent of Midwest School District directly ensures ethics education for families and students although I could not find any specifics on how that would be accomplished at either the district, school, or the

classroom level. I see, therefore, why Ms. Anson would view *ethics* as a term used in professional places or educated adults in the workplace.

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory

As defined in this study, ethical frameworks and moral theories are structures and underlying value systems on which we base our decision making in ethical dilemmas. They represent the broader context of reasoning in which morals are expected and applied to the solution of a problem. The ethical frameworks applied in this case study for the conceptual framework and considered in these findings are Aristotelian *Virtue Ethics*, Kant's *Respect for Agents*, and John Stuart Mill's *Consequentialism*. The moral theories described in Chapter 2 and considered in these findings are Kohlberg's *Stages of Moral Development* and Noddings' *Care Theory*.

The interviews and journal entries were analyzed using descriptive coding first, pattern coding, and then thematic analysis. The descriptive codes (see Appendix E) used represented the ethical frameworks and moral theories that form the conceptual framework for the study, and the pattern codes represented the research questions. The conceptual framework presented below shows how the teachers' perceptions expressed during interviews and journaling can be viewed through the lens of one or more of these ethical or moral structures, which may influence their interactions with students during behavior-related situations. Remember, the participants had no knowledge of the ethical frameworks and moral theories through which I would feed their perceptions. This decision was made intentionally so that the participants would not be tempted to ascribe to the value system with which they most closely agreed and inadvertently adapt their perceptions to that value system.



Figure 2. Conceptual framework derived from Ch. 2. Citations available in References section.

I asked Ms. Anson and the other participants a series of questions (see Appendix C) that first elicited information about their own value systems and how they came to adopt these morals and ethics. The second section of the interview questions presented the participants with ethical dilemmas for which they proposed solutions. During data analysis, the interview answers revealed which ethical framework or moral theory underpins the participants' values used to make these types of decisions. In some cases, the researcher could match the data with more than one value system from which participants make certain decisions or arrive at solutions to ethical dilemmas. In addition, the ethical frameworks or moral theories matched to the participant data often varied depending on the subject of the dilemma, particularly when the dilemma included a family member.

More than any other participant, Ms. Anson was diverse in her inadvertent use and perceptions of ethical frameworks and moral theories, which depended on the person, situation, and relation to her own childhood experiences. During Ms. Anson's discussion of her definitions

of morals and ethics, she felt that the morals people learn are developed from a young age but not recognized until they are older, even believing that all people have morals “whether or not they’re aware of them.” Regarding ethics, which she felt related more to professional conduct, and perceived that students were only just “flirting with [ethics] in middle school and by the time [they] are seniors in high school, I think they have developed some ethical views, but certainly professional people have that.” In addition, although she believed it was part of a teacher’s role to instruct students in ethics and morals, she did not think that students were ready to learn and apply these values until they were older.

I think you can teach things in a pure sense when kids are little, but I think they develop more shades of this the older they get. And then they develop ethics because they can think about situation and all the different choices of what you can do.

For this point, Ms. Anson felt she needed to frame her opinion with an example:

Say a group of kids is in a store; they’re friends, and one of the kids steals something...okay. A child might say, “Oh, you stole something; that’s wrong;” whereas, the older you get, you might think of different options. You might think why did they do that. I don’t want my friend to get in trouble. I don’t want to get in trouble too. And you might weigh your options...is the ethical thing to turn them in? Well, maybe. It’s your friend; you all know stealing is wrong. You could distance yourself. You could go to your friend and say, “Put that back.” You could go to the store manager and say, “My friend just stole something.” I’ve presented these situations to students and only the very least mature kids would have that simple right from wrong...the older kids, they get they’ll have layers of ways they look at things, and that’s where ethics comes in...to respect the other person but not necessarily cross your own boundaries of right and wrong.

In this example, Ms. Anson expressed that she perceived children to hold an immature view of ethics if they looked at a situation as simply right or wrong, regardless of what values they hold or what they have been taught at home. This perspective is in line with Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, defined in Chapter Two, which will be discussed in Chapter Five in the context of the literature. She detaches the treatment of others from personal morals by saying that a child who looks to his or her own moral beliefs of stealing as wrong is not as mature as a child who realizes that there could be justifiable reasons for stealing, depending on the case. In other words, having personal moral beliefs is acceptable as long as the person is flexible when he or she is applying these morals to a situation.

Personally, Ms. Anson acted many times out of fear of disappointing her parents or other authority figures. She recalled a story from her childhood when her grandmother saw her pouring her milk outside instead of drinking it like she was told. She explained,

I always had a fear of getting in trouble and doing something wrong...Yeah, I would think it starts with fear...and I think fear is a good motivator with kids. You don't want them to put their hands on the stove? You get harsh about it. They gotta be scared to do it!

She went on to explain that this fear of disappointing authority or getting in trouble is a child's only motivator for many years as they are growing up. She stated, "If you respect someone and you let that person down, you're going to learn that lesson." This was her experience during childhood; she felt a deep sense of guilt when she disappointed her father, an authority figure she respected.

I presented the participants with a series of ethical dilemmas to ascertain how they would react. From this reaction, I could, in most cases, readily identify the ethical framework or moral theory from which they based their decisions and solutions to ethical dilemmas. Ms. Anson

consistently provided solutions that were in line with acting out of the happiness of others and herself. To demonstrate this, she used phrases, such as, “I wouldn’t hurt her feelings because, if she asks me what I think, I think she’s already insecure,” “I’d lie...I’m not going to tear down somebody’s image,” and “I would be careful what I said...I don’t like making anybody very unhappy.” She consistently expressed that she did not find value in making decisions or saying things that would make others unhappy.

When Ms. Anson did experience confrontations with students, she often showed care in order to frame every interaction in a relational nature, which she felt was better received by students in most behavior-related situations. She explained,

I try to be [personal with my students], but...some kids, you just never make the connection...I just try conversation with people. Get to know them, but some kids are particularly remote. But yeah, I like to bond...I try to win them over. We laugh and we joke and I try to give them multicultural literature and that kind of creates a bond that they like that I promote that.

To show her use of care with the students, Ms. Anson recollected a situation where the students were upset about recent events related to the Black Lives Matter movement, and she connected with those students over a situation that happened with her own son.

And I never put down anything they care about...but it’s a matter of cooperation. You never refuse to cooperate because these police officers are trained. I told them the truth [about my son.] I said, “I totally understand how you feel.” But see, they’ll remember that story years from now.

She went on to explain that the students did not think she would understand what their fears were in relation to this situation, but relating a personal experience allowed her to connect to her students.

In another situation, Ms. Anson recalled a response to a single student's behavior where she used care to reach that student. The student was highly intelligent but had been showing aggression and sarcasm in his classroom interactions.

I took him out in the hall, and I didn't even know what I was going to say. I took a deep breath, and I said, "What is going on with you? You weren't like this at the beginning of the year, and I know this really isn't you." He goes, "You know, you're right...soccer's over." He's bored. I said, "That doesn't flatter you at all. I can't move you to a higher level classroom because your grades are bad; you think everything's a joke." We had a nice talk. He is trying. This week, he looked at me, and we made eye contact, and he knew...and I felt like it meant something. But, wow, what a long battle it's been.

Ms. Anson knew that the behavior this student was displaying was out of character, and that the student needed someone to care enough to confront him about it. She felt that this care broke down the wall that the student had built after the pressure of getting good grades to participate in sports was no longer his motivator for good behavior.

Perceptions About Students

During the interviews, the participants gave specific perceptions they had about what motivated the behavior of students, which often included the students acting out of a certain value system. When this did occur, the participants often tailored their subsequent interaction with that student based on which value system they perceived the student to hold. In addition, the

journal entries provided supplementary perceptions and interactions that supported the data collected during interviews.

Motivated by age. Ms. Anson perceives students to be basically motivated to do good, to be respectful, to be loyal, and to expect justice in conjunction with their age and maturity. She made many references to stages in a student's life when he or she could and could not learn morals and show ethical reasoning. As she had taught mostly in high school, her perceptions of younger children were based on raising her own children and on her childhood experiences.

When asked about a particular ethical dilemma, Ms. Anson stated that she had actually presented this dilemma to her students through the related literature. The dilemma involved two brothers from Greek literature, who died in battle, one on the king's side and one on the enemy's side. The king declared that the traitorous brother would rot where he lay instead of receiving the burial rituals that would please the gods. The sister of the two buried the body in defiance of the law of the king and was sentenced to death. Although she felt that this dilemma had hidden deep layers of meaning and contemplation, she did not feel that students at the sophomore level could understand these layers.

Ms. Anson explained later that students could be swayed to answer or behave a certain way, or according to a particular value system, when they are younger, but by the time they reach high school age, students are more independent in their moral thinking.

I don't think we can legislate that so much. They can handle that themselves. They like to make their own decisions. I'm amazed at the different maturity levels...it's pretty hard to believe, but juniors and seniors have a solidness about them that the freshmen and sophomores don't have. It has something to do with brain development. They're not children anymore...they avoid the negative repercussions. They don't want to repeat that.

Even in a more mature stage of moral development, the students Ms. Anson is referring to here still are not acting out of a place of doing right for the greater good of society or because they are motivated by a now intrinsic sense of right and wrong. She perceives students at the highest level she teaches to be at the moral stage of development where they equate right and wrong to consequences. This perception closely aligns with the preconventional stages of Kohlberg's (1981) Stages of Moral Development.

Although Ms. Anson believes the students are basically good, she also believes that they are not mature enough to understand why morals and ethical dilemmas call for right action. When presented with rules that govern the school and assist with the avoidance of chaos in the classroom, Ms. Anson feels that students' behaviors are related to their ignorance of the rules. She explained, "I try to tell them how they're not looking at the situation from the right view. They just don't like the rules. I said, 'No, you just don't understand [the rules.]' These rules are very well thought out." This ignorance of the rules is a result of their age and brain development in Ms. Anson's perception. This thinking is aligned with Kohlberg's (1981) Stages of Moral Development, which will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

A sense of justice. In the example from Greek literature above, Ms. Anson felt that the students in high school were even too young to understand the deeper moral implications of the decision the sister had to make. She did feel, however, that the students in this school would choose loyalty to family over the law every time a dilemma of this sort was presented to them. "They're going to defy," she explained, "if there is one thing you cannot violate with kids, it's their sense of justice."

In an example Ms. Anson gave about a student she may have scolded too harshly, who later came back to class behaving better, she perceived the student to hold the same ethical

beliefs that she held as a child, which may have accounted for her reaction to him when he returned to class.

I have this kid who just can't control himself...and he's really functioned pretty...he was very pleasant but he'd just tear a class up by making noises or pounding the desk or getting up and dancing. He totally imploded...a couple days in a row, and I just said, "Don't come back here." And I felt pretty guilty about that. The next day he came in trying harder, and I came in trying harder. Nothing was said...but I think really he didn't like that he disappointed me, and I didn't like that I was so [rude] with him.

Ms. Anson thought that this student came back to class with improved behavior because he felt guilty for disappointing her. This may have been why her behavior mirrored his; she remembered how she felt when she disappointed her father and how that made her alter her behavior toward him.

Morality or safety. I was surprised to find that Ms. Anson perceived students to act from a place of safety. The discussion of this perception started with her description of her own grandchild, who she felt was too young to understand morals and good behavior; rather, the child acted from a need to feel secure, not knowing or caring whether that action was right or wrong. She related this concept to her students, who she felt often acted out of the same place, and when they did this, she perceived that her students were knowingly doing wrong. She explained,

I think if you don't feel safe though, your morals can be skewed...because, you know, number one, you want to feel safe from harm. [You] just go into protective mode that if you have to do something you know is bad to feel safe, you'll do it. As I said, I have this really difficult group of students this year. They have this ingrained habit of...it isn't full-blown bullying, but they pick at each other. The only way they know is confrontation, and

they bait each other constantly whether they're friends or not. I stop them every time...I think that protects everyone.

In addition to these perceptions about her students, in general, relating to their morals and ethics, the participants were asked to identify any perceptions they felt were specifically related to certain demographic groups of students in Midwest High School. In general, Ms. Anson found the boys to be much more immature in relation to behavior than the girls. "The girls," she claimed, "it's the relationship drama that's a really big problem. It's the weird attitude they always give." As previously explained, however, Ms. Anson acts out of a place of care to "win them over" and thus influence their interactions in a positive way. This is in line with Noddings' (2003) Care Theory, which will be discussed in Chapter Five.

In addition to gender, Ms. Anson perceived students of middle to high socioeconomic status (SES) who did not show kindness to those outside of their SES to be acting disrespectfully. To these students, she related to them by using reasoning I matched with Kant's (1886) Respect for Agents. She explains to the students that they do not know what other students have or do not have, and they do not know what others are going through. She believes that these situations—cell phones, uniforms, and classrooms supplies—need to be put into context for students so that they act as they would want to be treated if in the same situation.

Behavior and Interactions

This section will comprise Ms. Anson's interactions with students and the findings related to how her perceptions influence not only those interactions but also the students' behavior. Special attention should also be paid to which behaviors Ms. Anson deems wrong or immoral. These further discussions on the nature of the interactions and the relation of the interactions and behaviors to the research questions will be discussed in Chapter Five.

In the stealing example narrated in the *Ethical Framework/Moral Theory* section earlier in this chapter, Ms. Anson notes that some students would immediately say stealing was wrong behavior, while others want to know more about the motivation behind the act and options they have for addressing the behavior. When asked what she would advise the students to do in this situation, she felt that it was not her responsibility to tell them what to do as much as it was her responsibility to offer them all of the possible solutions and allow the students to choose which one is in line with their own morals. Therefore, when interacting with students, Ms. Anson is careful to provide options and their consequences rather than providing direct solutions. This level of interaction is in line with Ms. Anson's belief that it is her responsibility to offer teachable moments through the content, but it is not her responsibility to teach students which decisions to make, as that was the responsibility of her father during her childhood and not of her teachers. The teacher's responsibility is that of awareness only.

In line with Ms. Anson's thinking about the fear of disappointment being a motivator for doing right, she acted from a moral theory with her students that showed care. She described a situation where a student was having a difficult time in school due to some learning and mental issues and became out of control with his behavior in class. After scolding the student and asking him to leave class, Ms. Anson quickly felt guilt over the harshness of this interaction. In fact, when reviewing the data, any time Ms. Anson responded to a student in any way except care, she experienced guilt, even when the student was clearly at fault. In these situations, Ms. Anson quickly reverted to a position of care and restored the teacher-student relationship.

Ms. Anson consistently showed care in her interactions with students. Regardless of what she perceived their morals and ethical maturity to be, she claimed that care was the best way to respond. Ms. Anson believed that many of her students act out of a place of safety, loyalty, and

justice when making behavior-related decisions. Her perceptions of safety and loyalty are in line with Aristotle's Virtue Ethics, and justice has been discussed by Kohlberg (1981), Noddings and Slote (2003), and Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004). Both of these moral value systems were discussed in detail in Chapter Two and will be discussed in Chapter Five as it relates to how these perceptions influence her interactions with students and the teacher-student relationship.

Case 2: Ms. Benson

Of all four participants, Ms. Benson seemed to be the most open about what she felt, as well as where her perceptions might be challenged through the process of the interview and the types of questions I asked her. She found the questions thought-provoking, and at times, she became surprised by her own answers. Ms. Benson has been teaching for nearly ten years in the Midwest School District at the same high school and has taught courses in multiple content areas. Ms. Benson has volunteered to sponsor graduating classes, which affords her the opportunity to work with students after school doing enjoyable activities that are free from academic expectations. We met for the interview at a quiet chain restaurant for lunch, and like Ms. Anson, Ms. Benson and I had lite conversation that made the tone of the interview more relaxed. Her interview lasted two hours with responses that were both focused and detailed.

Defining Morals and Ethics

This is one of the topics that challenged Ms. Benson to examine more closely her own understanding. At first mention, she claimed morals and ethics were synonymous; however, I could clearly see her understanding forming as she discussed the two terms. Morals, she asserted, were "the little things...I would think to tell a white lie, is that morally wrong?", while ethics are "the big ideas." After this initial definition, Ms. Benson seemed to question her thinking because she had never been asked to consider these terms for what they meant or how they were used in a

person's life. Through her journey to tease out her own solid understanding of morals and ethics, she landed on the following:

...ethically that's like the right thing to do and then morals it's the right -- maybe morals are more religious...I think morality...I do think a lot more religion comes into it where ethics is more just like our society as a whole whether you're a certain faith or not, those are just things that are ethically right or wrong I guess.

Additionally, Ms. Benson viewed ethics as subjective, but she felt most morals were universal. She stated, "I don't think, morally, like telling the truth is the wrong thing. I think if you told the truth, again, that's morally the right thing to do. So morals are universal. Absolutely." She recognized ethics to have areas of choice and consequences. This will be discussed in the following section on *Behavior and Interactions*.

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory

When matching Ms. Benson's data to the various ethical and moral structures, I noticed that she utilized fewer ethical frameworks and moral theories in her own life and when interacting with students than Ms. Anson. Evidenced in her definition of morals and ethics, Ms. Benson felt that religion played a significant role in her own moral value system. I did not, consequently, find it surprising that she held closely to Aristotle's Virtue Ethics when analyzing her data. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Benson did not know she was using this particular framework in decision making; rather, I was able to match her responses with characteristics of this framework during data analysis. She explained,

I always remember my parents talking about not lying, not stealing...Like, I got caught stealing one time, you know, and it wasn't even so much about the consequences that I was going to get. It was what my parents were going to think of me...I had to go and

apologize. My parents were really big into corporal punishment, but I remember for that incident, I didn't get corporal punishment. It was more serious, and I think like that was true Catholic guilt...morally, like hopefully your parents have taught you not to cheat, right? Hopefully, they've taught you not to lie. Those kind of things...it's not okay to cheat and it's not okay to lie.

Here, Ms. Benson shows how her upbringing influenced what she considered right and wrong behavior and morals. Simply, there was a list of virtues that she was obligated to follow, that were non-negotiable and resulted in negative consequences.

The virtues she held in her personal life were also the expectations she had of her students. She stated,

I become the heavy, the enforcer...so if you don't want to say we're teaching morals, we're definitely teaching ethics...don't cheat on a test or don't lie or don't do those other things. Either we have rules or we don't.

This is consistent with her definition of ethics, outlined in the previous section. She believes ethics to be right decision making regardless of religion even though she indicated that she was taught values consistent with the teachings of the Catholic church.

In addition to holding to particular virtues in her personal life, Ms. Benson also tries to avoid hurting other's feelings. When presented with ethical dilemmas, more often than not, Ms. Benson claimed that she would not hurt the other person, but that she would not compromise her own values either. For example, she explained how she and her husband taught her son that it is never acceptable to lie, but they also taught him that hurting someone's feelings is not acceptable. This is a clear ethical dilemma for a person when they are faced with a situation where telling the truth would cause feelings to be hurt. She wondered, "Man, am I teaching him

to lie? It's not okay to say to somebody [their] hair looks like crap. You know, I just [told him] you don't say anything." Ms. Benson went on to give additional instances where she would be faced with lying and, instead, would say something that was true but did not hurt the person. "It's like this with clothing too...if it makes you feel good and you like it...okay." Ms. Benson would not lie to make someone feel good, but she would follow up with a question that changed the subject or shifted the focus, such as, "Does it make you feel good? Okay then." This ethical reasoning coincides with Mill's (1863) Consequentialism.

Perceptions About Students

In the previous section, I discussed how Ms. Benson held to and used ethical frameworks or moral theories to support her values and behaviors toward students. Particularly, she held to certain virtues in her personal life, but when interacting with others, she shifted to a decision-making process that would avoid hurt feelings, or preserve the other person's happiness. Interestingly, Ms. Benson did not perceive her students to behave primarily out of either one of these value systems. In contrast, she believed their behavior and decisions to be based, at their most rudimentary level, on their age and the knowledge that adolescents can possess at their brain's current moral capacity. She explained,

I think with kids making decisions...like, your brain's not fully developed. It's not fair and so maybe that's why we have morals in place...to help 'til you become an age where your brain is fully developed. And maybe it's not even then; I don't know...but to help you make those decisions...with age comes wisdom. I think as you mature, your outlook changes...because now...[you] get the big picture.

Ms. Benson goes on to relate a story about a student who she had in class freshman year and again senior year. She praised him for being different senior year and claimed that his behavior

and improved decision making were the result of his age and maturity. She said, “Sometime between their freshman and senior year, they develop...He’s not blaming the teacher. He’s blaming himself...taking responsibility. So, yes, ethics change as you get older.”

Race and survival. When asked to relate her perceptions about certain demographics of students at Midwest High School, Ms. Benson discussed those perceptions through the lenses of race, gender, socioeconomic status, and cognitive ability. When discussing her perceptions about students of differing races and cultures, Ms. Benson felt that her morals, being a white woman, were different than her African American students, in particular. She explained, “Kids will say to me sometimes...the kids think you are not...you’re white. You don’t know. Like they think because I’m white that I’m wealthy. So is there such a thing as white morality versus other morality?” What it sounded like Ms. Benson was really referring to was more related to socioeconomic status than race or culture. She further explained,

Sometimes I think these kids’ morality has to do with a survival code. Like...what’s the story? About like Robin Hood...if you steal from somebody who’s rich and can afford it, is it really stealing? And if you’re using the money to help somebody out, is that wrong? People sometimes have done things differently just to survive.

Then Ms. Benson went on to describe the mindset she perceives some of her students to have about this example. In her estimation, they believe that the wealthier person does not really need as much as they have, so the stealing is justifiable, based on the student’s moral code.

Race and loyalty. Another perception Ms. Benson has of her students morality based on race and culture is that the students hold strictly to the virtue of loyalty. This moral value made Ms. Benson uncomfortable because she felt that students did not fully understand the

consequences of remaining loyal to a friend or family member regardless of civil law or institutional rules.

The kids will talk about loyalty with their family. I have kids in gangs, but they don't say it. And if you ask them about it sometimes the kids will be like..."...we can't talk about it," or "No," but they hang around kids that are. Yes, loyalty is important, but I think with growth, you realize that at some point, is it worth going to jail for the rest of your life?

Hopefully, they learn that, while loyalty is important, it also has its limits.

The point Ms. Benson made here also speaks to her belief that students' morals do not develop until they are older and can understand more complex ethical reasoning.

Morals and poverty. As mentioned earlier, Ms. Benson related her perceptions regarding student morals and socioeconomic status. In the previous section on *Race and Survival*, she felt that her African American students could be behaving out of a different moral value system because of their race or because of their socioeconomic status. She could not definitively say. In one part of the interview, Ms. Benson did say that the students that gave her behavioral issues "were not dumb;" rather, "It's the poverty and not having that support at home." She went on to describe how students whose parents struggle financially sometimes have to work more than one job and are not home to morally influence their children as much as a wealthier family who can sustain their finances on one job per parent. Ms. Benson explained this perception using an anecdote.

I called a mom one time because the kid...he was a junior who was failing my class. He was sleeping all the time in class, and I was like "No, you can't sleep." And this was getting ugly, and the mom said, "I work second shift. I don't get home 'til one o'clock in

the morning. He's already up; he doesn't go to bed when I tell him. He's grown at the age of sixteen."

This student's mother had surrendered the moral development of her son at the age of sixteen. This causes some students to behave in ways that contradict the rules of the school or ethical guidelines teachers have established in their classrooms. One of those behaviors was described earlier when discussing how Ms. Benson perceived some students to rationalize certain unethical or immoral behavior for the sake of basic survival.

In addition to race and socioeconomic status, Ms. Benson briefly mentioned her perceptions of student morals related to gender and to cognitive ability. She explained that she had always felt that girls would be more moral and, consequently, better behaved, but her experience at Midwest High School had contradicted that assumption. She stated, "I'm seeing more and more girls getting into fights at school." Even though Ms. Benson felt that girls had issues with morals, she still held that boys could not develop moral understanding or reasonable ethical decision making because of their brain development at high school age.

They're just not ready to make [decisions], and we talk about that in my class...I'm like, "Do you know at what age girls' brains will fully develop? Scientifically, it's eighteen. But do you know what age boys' brains are scientifically developed?" I was at a conference one time... at twenty-five! So when we talk about boys do[ing] dumb things...their brains aren't fully developed...so maybe that's why we have morals in place...to help 'til you become an age where your brain's fully developed...to help you make those decisions.

With regard to cognitive ability, Ms. Benson perceived her honors students to care more about school and behave more appropriately, in general. She also mentioned that the classes were minimally diverse, with most of the students being white.

Most of my AP kids come in...it's not as diverse as what I would like it to be...my first hour class, I have three kids of color. My second hour class, I have 20 kids, and I have two kids of color. It's not good. It's not diverse. The expectation is that we are here to learn. It's a whole different mindset...like, they're quiet. I had to have a discussion with a kid the other day, and I started the conversation with, "I can't believe we're having this discussion in an AP class."

Ms. Benson perceived her high ability students to know more about appropriate, or moral, behavior so much that she did not expect them to need adult guidance when it came to behavior. Rather, their behavior should be self-regulated because of the level of maturity and cognitive ability she perceives these students to have.

Behavior and Interactions

When interacting with students, Ms. Benson acted primarily from the belief that she is, ultimately, showing her care for the students' futures when she imposes the institutional rules of Midwest High School. This reflects Ms. Benson's primary ethical framework, Virtue Ethics, and not Care Theory, as one might assume from the above statement. This will be explained in depth in Chapter Five. She believes that there are certain values that are right, and to act against those values is wrong. For this reason, the previously mentioned values are also unacceptable in her classroom: lying, stealing (cheating), direct disobedience, use of offensive language, and unkindness, to name a few. This is evidenced in some of the interactions Ms. Benson described in her interview and journals.

We were in the library so students could work on their essay assignment for my class.

This male student was talking to a peer and said the F word. I told the student that I heard him and that he needed to apologize for his language. He refused. I asked him if he was sure that he wanted to do that and he told me that he was not going to apologize so I told him that he needed to leave the class. I often have incidents of students using bad language in class, but they know they are not supposed to talk like that, they apologize and we move on. I am not quite sure why this student refused to apologize for his language. Does he think this language is acceptable and therefore he does not need to apologize? Is it because I asked him to apologize or is it because he knew I would make him leave and he did not want to work on his essay? (Benson, Journal, December 2, 2016)

In the example above, Ms. Benson held to the school rule that students are not to use foul language. As she did not want the student to miss the learning opportunity for the day, she gave the student a choice: apologize or leave. In Ms. Benson's opinion, the student made the wrong decision although she was not sure exactly why the student would choose to miss the learning opportunity in order to stand for saying a curse word.

In the above incidence and in many others Ms. Benson relayed during her interview, she gave the students a choice of whether to adhere to her perception of right and wrong morals or whether to make the wrong choice. Although this was presented as a choice, there was clearly an expectation of which choice would yield good consequences and which would yield negative consequences. Ms. Benson related her experience with a young lady to whom she gave a choice.

I had a girl who I moved her seat because she was talking. I said, "Honey, this is your new seat." [She said], "I'm not sitting there." [I answered], "Okay, well, you have some

choices...you can sit here and be in class or you cannot. It's your choice because this is your new seat." And she chose to leave. So then I called home, and I talked to mom about it and the mom just says, "She knows better...I'll talk to her. Thanks." So then she came to class and sat in her seat and we're moving forward. I explained to mom that she was talking and needs to get where she cannot be distracted. So then the girl comes to class and she's wearing a hoodie. I have her seventh hour. [She said], "You're the only one that says anything." I'm the only one that cares.

In this anecdote, Ms. Benson was clearly following the rules of the school pertaining to uniform and trying to persuade this student to make a choice that would allow her to follow rules and get her education. She went on to describe how this student finally looked at her grades in the computer with Ms. Benson and admitted that she was not succeeding in school because she did not want to follow the rules. Ms. Benson then discussed the idea of authority, and how students do not realize that they will have authority their whole lives, not just until they become an adult.

Many of the stories Ms. Benson relayed were similar to this, where the students were not following already established school rules, and since Ms. Benson's ethical framework agreed with that of the school rules, she expected the students to make what she felt was the right choice. In this right choice, she believed she was showing care for the student's success, although, as mentioned earlier, this does not reflect the characteristics of Noddings' (2003) Care Theory.

In addition to Ms. Benson's perceptions about student behavior, Ms. Benson said that she worked to build relationships with students that would normally break down those walls she perceived them to have in relation to loyalty to peers and the insecurities students in poverty may

have that she assumed made them behave differently than their peers. These interactions will be discussed against ethical frameworks and moral theories in Chapter Five.

Case 3: Ms. Carson

Ms. Carson is a fairly new teacher, although she has been a substitute teacher for many years. She has taught full time in Midwest School District for less than five years and has taught in three different schools in the district, both middle and high school. Included in her teaching experience was a short time in a rural high school, which was demographically and culturally opposite of the school where she teaches now. Ms. Carson and I met for the interview during dinner. The restaurant was noisy, but this did not seem to be an issue for Ms. Carson and the candidness in her responses. The interview with Ms. Carson lasted the longest, which was 2.5 hours. She seemed to feel comfortable sharing her personal life with me, which made the responses for the interview lengthy and thoroughly explained. Ms. Carson was also the most liberal of all the participants in her views of students, which will be explained in the following sections.

Defining Morals and Ethics

Ms. Carson was decisive in her definitions of morals and ethics. She did see the two terms as having different definitions; however, she felt that, at some point, they cross paths in decision making and behavior in a complementary way and in an adverse way, at times.

Morals are the differences of right and wrong that you are raised with by your parents, by, you know, your parents tell you what's right or wrong. And how you follow the rules. Ethics is the right way or wrong way of going about something. I look at ethics as more professional, and morals as personal. Like personal conduct. And I do believe at some point they tie hand in hand but, you know...sometimes they clash too. Because, you

know, you may believe one thing but ethically, professionally it's something totally different.

She gave an example of how morals and ethics may clash in the school system when the dilemma involved following the rules or doing what the student believed to be right morally. "I had an eighth grader, never gotten in trouble but he ended up getting suspended for three days because he defended his little sister who was being bullied. I told him 'I'm proud of you.'" In this short anecdote, Ms. Carson demonstrated how she showed support for the student's definition of morals more than the ethics, or rules, of the school system, as she perceived these two to be in conflict in this situation.

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory

Ms. Carson's explanations for her decisions and interactions with students revealed distinct patterns for which ethical frameworks and moral theories she inadvertently used on a regular basis. When she was younger, Ms. Carson was taught several morals, or virtues, that she should accept as her own; however, she did not feel that these morals, although personally right, were universal. She held strongly to the belief that lying and adultery were immoral and that loyalty and respect were moral. Of loyalty, she explained,

I guess my thought was, you know, family comes first...if you know there's a drug available to save your spouse's life, and it's not available to anyone, but you know how to get it...I mean, if you have to break the law to get it, well, then at least you know you tried, better rather than watch[ing] your spouse wither away...I guess when it comes to a loved one, you're going to do what you're going to do, and I can sympathize with that. She perceived some of her students to feel the same, which I will discuss in the next section, detailing her perceptions. Of respect, Ms. Carson thought this to be a standard she set for herself

and modeled for students to either emulate or not, depending on whether or not they held this same moral at home.

In addition to loyalty and respect, Ms. Carson placed a high value on honesty; in fact, she referred to this virtue more than any other she discussed. She believed, first, that lying was morally wrong, and she avoided doing so as much as she could, even when the truth seemed harsh or unkind. She shared, “My dad always said, ‘Never lie...ever!’” When asked if she would be honest with a friend even if she knew it would hurt that friend, she replied,

I would be honest with her. I mean, because I feel like we have that level of intimacy where she can trust that I’m going to tell her what I think. If she does get angry, I’ll just say, “Listen, you asked me my opinion; I gave it to you.” So I would be totally honest. With that total honesty, Ms. Carson felt a level of remorse, even though she believed honesty to be the right way to respond, “I would apologize. ‘I’m sorry I hurt your feelings, but if you’re going to ask me what my opinion is, I’m going to be straightforward and not lie to you.’” She went on to explain that she felt the hurt from the truth would fade as she helped those she had hurt find a solution for the issue about which they originally asked.

Interestingly, when advising others about honesty, whether it be family or students, she took a different approach. She explained a conversation with her son,

I told him as far as lying goes, you don’t lie for personal benefit. And that’s another thing...I want to say there’s lies for personal benefit and there’s lies to help others or to...for the benefit of others. So you can lie for the benefit of others if you know they’re going to find out the truth eventually...like if you want to give a Christmas gift, you don’t dare tell what that gift is...but eventually, the truth will come out.

In this example, Ms. Carson felt that lying was permissible if the person lying knew the lie was temporary and not for personal gain. She cited another example of bending the truth for a child if a pet died because the child may not be ready for the truth because of their age or level of emotional maturity at the time. Ms. Carson's beliefs about how to act in situations that involve honesty are most closely related to the principles of Consequentialism, discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

In addition to the discussion about lying, Ms. Carson admittedly held a liberal view of ethics and morals when they related to what other people do as opposed to what she held in her personal life. She explained, "I like to think of myself as very liberal and open and accepting of other people. But when it comes to my standards, I'm extremely conservative, okay. Extremely conservative." She felt that this contradiction may be perceived by others as a willingness to hold to liberal moral views in her own life, and especially her friends and family advise her to do so without understanding the underlying ethical and moral foundation she actually uses to make decisions for herself.

With her students, Ms. Carson felt that the best way to elicit appropriate behavior from students was to show the students she cared about them. She explained, "I think I can be firm but at the same time show that I care...I think I get a response out of it." In one such instance, Ms. Carson felt that her nurturing and respectful relationship with a student promoted that student's positive behavior and interactions with her.

They just know that when they feel respected, they will show respect...I have this one girl who's not even a student of mine anymore. She was a student of mine last year. She's a pain in the rear end, but she pops in my room...she does tell me more than I need to know, but she says things to me that she respects her stepmom and she calls me 'school

mom.’ Maybe there’s certain people in their lives that they come across that they respect, and then they meet other people who are similar and they like how they’re treated.

This reciprocal respect is in line with Noddings’ (2003) Care Theory described in Chapter Two and will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Perceptions About Students

Due to her belief in honesty as a high moral priority, Ms. Carson shared many candid perceptions she had about students. One major perception Ms. Carson had about students is that many are not being taught proper morals at home. In her experience, students want teachers to set strict boundaries because the students are missing those rules for behavior at home. She described her classroom as a place where the rules were set for the students to be able to learn and be successful, and most of the students adjusted well to that environment once they realized what their boundaries were. She explained,

I think the morals they hold are they test their boundaries, but once they know that they can’t get away with anything, I think they realize who they like...I set boundaries; they respect them...And so when they have boundaries, and they’re firm boundaries, they’ve learned this teacher has an expectation of me and if I don’t meet that expectation, you know, I fail, and I don’t want to be a failure, and I know clearly how I need to succeed.

This explanation seems to indicate that Ms. Carson perceives a level of awareness on the students’ part of the consequences of testing boundaries too much, and an awareness that adults look out for the best interests of children.

Ms. Carson also shared that she perceived students to initially ignore what they were taught about right and wrong because at their ages, students could only learn right from wrong by doing wrong and receiving consequences.

If parents let kids choose, it would be by example or trial and error. They would have to learn the consequences and hopefully they will learn that you can't do that. I think that kids can learn from a certain extent, but I also think that...I just think that they need to be pre-taught to think about these [moral] situations...Some kids can't even think ahead.

Interestingly, this perception clashed with information revealed in the previous portions of the interview, where Ms. Carson explained that parents are responsible for teaching right from wrong. In this example and others, Ms. Carson indicated that children, students in particular, have a basic knowledge of what is right and wrong, but they ultimately learn how to behave within these morals from society's imposed consequences for immoral behavior. When I brought this to her attention, she replied,

I think, yeah, it's really confusing to me, you know. But then, at the same time, I think society teaches parents. Ya know, because parents...they went through the consequences, so they try to pass it on to the child, but in the end, yes, society.

In addition to general perceptions regarding students' moral and ethical reasoning that influenced their behavior, Ms. Carson shared many demographically categorized perceptions of her students. These categories included students' cognitive abilities, socioeconomic status, and race. Findings for each will be outlined in the following sections.

Morals and cognitive ability. According to Ms. Carson, students with high cognitive abilities are diligent and follow institutional rules, whether that institution is the home or the school. Ms. Carson demonstrated this point through an anecdote of a female student who was so intelligent and obedient that she felt it caused the student to behave anxiously. She noticed that the student's high level of intelligence may have caused issues with the student's ability to be autonomous. Her perceptions continued,

I think she has been raised that education was very important. I think it's expected of her that she is going to go on to a university, go on to college. And I think it's expected of her that she's going to do very, very well in order to be very, very successful. I really think she comes from a strong, supportive family background. That is what I get from her.

This perception shows the connection Ms. Carson has made between cognitive ability and morality.

In contrast, Ms. Carson believed students of lower cognitive ability to possess a moral code different from their more intelligent counterparts. She shared briefly that she had taught three separate students who struggled academically and behaved immorally. She even recounted differences between two students who struggled in class; one, she shared, struggled badly in reading and was highly distracted and used humor when she perceived him to feel inadequate. The other showed arrogance and refused help. She attributed this to his moral upbringing.

I'm wondering if one had a good respect for adults and knew and had more boundaries set, where the other one was told, you know, you're expected...well...being a jock and being athletic was important, and so if you were successful in that...if you found you were lacking somewhere else...maybe he felt like he wasn't good enough.

This perception is in line with Ms. Carson's perception of the behavior of moral students. When asked how a moral student behaves, she replied,

They care about their education. They want to do the best job they can. They don't disrupt the class. They are engaged in conversation like during class discussion. They get their work turned in on time. They are paying attention. They are accepting of critique, accepting of consequences.

Ms. Carson continued with a lengthy explanation of her perception that moral students behave autonomously, taking responsibility in learning and life.

Morals and poverty. “Maybe I’m making a poor correlation, but it seems to me the low readers seem to be from the low socioeconomic background.” These findings follow the previous section because Ms. Carson’s perception of students who struggle academically is tied to students who are raised in poverty. In the previous section, I shared Ms. Carson’s perception that students who struggle academically behave immorally. If then students who struggle academically are raised in poverty, it stands to reason that she perceives students who are raised in poverty to also behave immorally at times. Ms. Carson supports this perception,

I can’t generalize too much, but it just seems to me that the kids who are low come from low socioeconomic backgrounds...I see kids struggling, and then they have behavior issues and then they realize...oh I’m not at the same level as my friends. I have to compensate one way or another...those in poverty, it’s survival.

Ms. Carson went on to describe that this compensation can manifest in various ways, including an affinity for sports as a career or using humor, which usually resulted in class disruption. She felt that these students are taught to survive on their skills rather than their education. On the other hand, Ms. Carson felt that students whose families did not struggle financially had *success in education* as one of their morals.

Morals and race. Some of Ms. Carson’s strongest perceptions came from her experience with a diverse population of students. She perceived Hispanic students to hold, primarily, to the moral of loyalty within their culture. Ms. Carson also felt that Hispanic students did not demonstrate attention-seeking behavior. She explained, “Those who are well-behaved, that

follow the rules, are quiet. They're soft-spoken...they're not loud and obnoxious." She perceived these students to behave out of a sense of pride, which she felt was admirable.

In addition, Ms. Carson described what she referred to as a "moral expectation" within her Hispanic students' culture, in that males and females know their roles and happily submit to them, which is a moral imperative to them. When Ms. Carson shares her beliefs about gender equality, the Hispanic students, who are typically reserved in class, enter the discussion, "With my Hispanic kids, they go, well, that's not really what's expected of us at home. That's a man's work, or that's a woman's work...and then a real nice moral conversation about stuff like that."

Ms. Carson perceives her Black students, as well as what she describes as "White people who act like Black people" to primarily be motivated by competition. This was included with her earlier discussion about survival and students who use the skills they have in order to find success in lieu of academic success. She explains, "They want to compete. They want to be rappers and, you know, they want to be the basketball star." She went on to explain the opposite type of student.

Then there's the White kids and the Black kids who act like White kids...they want to succeed educationally, and they want, you know, you can tell they have a strong educational foundation from home because they speak well, they act well.

Ms. Carson attributed certain moral characteristics to being White or Black; however, after describing the differences between her perceptions of Hispanic, Black, and White students, Ms. Carson concluded this section of the interview by stating the fluidity of these views.

Now, I think the expectations are equal, but they're skewed because it depends on what's expected of them at home. I mean, you know, I think they're parallel, and I think that's the same with Whites too. It just depends on their family background what their moral

expectations are. But as far as my social expectations for my students, I try to make them all equal.

Where all of these perceptions blur for Ms. Carson are within her interactions with her students. These interactions and Ms. Carson's responses to certain student behaviors are discussed in the next section.

Behavior and Interactions

Ms. Carson's interactions with students are influenced by her perceptions of what students value. Remember that Ms. Carson perceives that students would give a teacher respect if they felt respected by the teacher. For this reason, she often utilizes care when interacting with students. She explained in an anecdote about a struggling student in one of her classes.

Now, I did have a student last year. He was quiet. I think he was very intelligent, but he just didn't apply himself. And when I did poetry, I told the kids I was doing blank verse poetry, but I was calling it freestyle. And so I was telling the kids...to write me a freestyle poem. He said, "Oh, I've got this," and he cranked out a poem right then and there. And he performed it! It was beautifully done...I said, "I knew you could do this! I knew you could!" He was so proud of himself.

In this example of Ms. Carson's interaction with a student, she created a task that allowed those who were interested in rapping to show academic success. In this way, Ms. Carson felt she was showing care. She described many instances where she would observe students who were struggling or even indifferent to education, in general, and she would forge a care relationship with those students in order to allow them to experience academic success. This is in line with Noddings' (2003) Care Theory, particularly the element of *dialogue* discussed in Chapter Two.

She not only showed this care to students based on her cultural perceptions. She also showed care to students based on her cognitive ability perceptions described in the previous section. She shared the story of one student who had an individualized education plan (IEP), who had been misplaced in her general education class instead of the inclusion class that contained a special education co-teacher.

I said, "I know you have an IEP," and he [said], "Yes." I said, "I want you to know you're the only one in here, and I think you're misplaced because you're supposed to have a co-teacher; however, I will work with you...with whatever that needs to be done, and I will not throw you under the bus in any way. And if you feel like I put a target on you, let me know because I'm trying really hard to save face for you." And he would smile, and he would [say], "I appreciate that."

With this student, Ms. Carson started by interacting based on her own ethical framework of Virtue Ethics, but she also added care in order to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect with that student, as she believed students to respond positively to teachers who show the virtue of respect. As mentioned previously, Ms. Carson did not have knowledge of these ethical frameworks or moral theories before or during interviews and journaling. I matched her data to these value structures during data analysis.

Ms. Carson showed care when interacting with students who she perceived to be respectful and demonstrate need. The interactions she described in the interview and journal that did not resolve positively were with students Ms. Carson perceived as disrespectful, the virtue that was used to describe each case. She shared the story of one student who displayed this disrespect.

He just flopped himself down in front of the classroom, and he immediately turned himself around, and he would just talk and talk and talk and talk. And as I was trying to...first of all, I took attendance, and I said, "I'm going to remember your name because right now, I have a problem with you because you're talking when I'm talking." And then he had to say something under his breath...he still wouldn't stop talking for an entire semester. That was the behavior I had from him. I had to throw him out of class I don't know how many times for disrespect.

Even when Ms. Carson tried later to develop a positive relationship with this student, he refused. She explained, "I tried joking with him. I tried sitting one on one with him, but it just, you know, I tried, and he had no interest at all." This was the only case of this kind that Ms. Carson relayed. In the other cases, Ms. Carson came to a conclusion about the student based on her perceptions, observations, and interactions. With this student, her conclusion was, "I think that he acted out because he was deficient," referring to the fact that he was in a remedial reading class. This is consistent with Ms. Carson's earlier perception that a connection existed between low cognitive ability and morally inappropriate behavior.

Case 4: Ms. Dawson

Ms. Dawson has been teaching for nearly 10 years, much like Ms. Benson. Unlike Ms. Benson, however, Ms. Dawson has been teaching in Midwest High School in one content area for the duration of her teaching experience thus far. For her interview, Ms. Dawson and I met for lunch, and she expressed before we started that she was comfortable responding to the interview questions and eating simultaneously. This did not seem to negatively affect the quality of her responses. I have known this participant for a number of years, so her interview was much more conversational than the others with a mixture of responses to questions and discussions of old

friends and previously mutual students. Ms. Dawson's interview lasted just over an hour, and her responses were succinct but informative. Although she has been teaching for only a short time, she has had the unique experience of working with the students in an extracurricular capacity. This experience allows her interactions with the students to be different from participants who only interact with the students in the classroom setting.

Defining Morals and Ethics

Ms. Dawson gave the most succinct answer to this question of all the participants. She seemed to have considered these terms before. She stated,

I think for the most part, to me, they're synonymous. But when I think more of morals, it's the right and wrong. Like how do you respond to certain situations? And I think ethics at times can be more in professional situations.

Like other participants, she believed morals to be personal choices of right or wrong; whereas, ethics dealt more with how one acts in a work context. She gave an example, "Like, is it ethical to have this conversation about a student even though they have an IEP that says you shouldn't?"

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory

During data analysis, I was able to match Ms. Dawson's data to several different ethical frameworks and moral theories when interacting with students, much like the other participants. She held to a distinct set of moral values, or virtues, that she had been taught by adults in her life from a very young age. She explained that her family had always held to the value of honesty, which caused hurt feelings and defensiveness until she learned by their example that she did not have to say everything that came to mind in order to remain honest. Ms. Dawson was also taught that loyalty to family was important, a trait she recognized in her parents and later in her students. She explained, "I think you have the innate responsibility that it's ingrained in you that

your family is who you're loyal to...I think that you have to almost give family the benefit of the doubt at first." Other virtues mentioned were obedience to authority and not taking anything that did not belong to her.

On the surface, Virtue Ethics seemed to be Ms. Dawson's primary ethical framework for decision making and gauging right from wrong in her students; however, as I proceeded into the deeper interview questions, other value systems seemed to take its place. Remember, she did not have knowledge of these ethical frameworks and moral theories during any part of the research study; rather, I matched her responses to these value structures during data analysis. Although Ms. Dawson was taught not to lie, she claimed that she would lie or postpone telling someone the truth if she knew the truth would hurt their feelings or if she could tell by their demeanor that they were not in the right mood to hear the truth. This was only the way she responded in her own life to family and friends; in the following section where I discuss her interactions with students, she shows that she reverts to Virtue Ethics as a foundation for determining if behavior is right or wrong and needs to be addressed.

As an outlier, Ms. Dawson felt strongly that students should behave a certain way based on what society expects of them, which she felt we all, by default of being in American institutions, have accepted as the rules of morality by which we will live collectively. She was first taught that this was the reason for the list of virtues that were acceptable. She shared the lesson from the adults in her life when she was younger, "It's an expectation of 'this is how the world works; this is how you're going to work in the world.'" As she began her career as an educator, Ms. Dawson then accepted this value system as her responsibility to her students. She felt that teachers were naturally to teach students morals and ethics, and she stated, "I think in the same token, you're trying to teach them to be a better citizen."

Interestingly, Ms. Dawson felt that her students already knew how to adhere to society's expectations of them, and she was uniquely aware of the expectations that motivate some students' behavior, which she referred to as "street code." She went on to explain, though, that she did not believe the students were genuine when fitting into this social structure.

I think it's kind of like the whole playing the game...fall into the gang and that socialization. I think some of them, they play the game, and they pretend like they're at least social with those people, so that way, they kind of set themselves up for success [because] they're not against them. But then you do have the kids that they're playing the game as I'm going to follow what my brother did; I'm going to follow what my dad did.

And then that's where we have the issue with the kids now in jail or some of them dead. After explaining that most students she knows are only behaving a certain way to stay safe, she also shared in this example that some students were actually the ones buying into this social construct of gang mentality. Although she recognized this as a social construct, she did not feel it was the best one for her students or any students. In fact, in her journal (December 8, 2016), she shared anecdotes of students who did not fit into the social construct the school had established and, therefore, were often sent to the office for rule infractions they already knew were wrong. These interactions will be discussed in the section below.

Perceptions About Students

Most likely because of the way Ms. Dawson was raised, she believed that students who lived in two-parent homes or even two-guardian homes were taught stronger morals than those who may have been raised by only their mother. She explained,

I think when you have a family structure...most of the time you're going to look like your two-parent households...but I think too even if our two parent is like a mom and a

grandmother or like an aunt and an uncle or something like that...If you have two different people pouring [morals] into that kid, you're going to have a better outcome. I still see it with some single-parent households because their patriarch is so strong, but that is few and far between.

This perception was understandable because of the strong moral influence of Ms. Dawson's father, who was strict but fair.

Another perception Ms. Dawson had of her students was that they were loyal to friends and family above even the law. She referred back to the students who she knows are in gangs, and these gangs become their family. She claimed, "They're going to respect their family first and then law is the very last thing." Ms. Dawson believed these loyalties to be the primary moral for the students she has in class, which is why they will risk their education to remain loyal to one of their peers. This value system is in opposition to her own, which may be why she expressed that the students are not motivated by right and wrong but by a street code.

Ms. Dawson also held perceptions that were related to students' race, gender, and cognitive ability. With regard to race and gender, Ms. Dawson's perceptions were few because she normally felt that she was able to have positive interactions with students regardless of demographics. She did, however, perceive an issue with Black females, as if they sought to challenge her authority. She recounted her experiences this year,

I have more troubles with young, Black girls than anything else. I think it's their perception of me...that they thought I was going to be a pushover, and when I fought back, then it turned into World War III...But the majority of that group were the ones who had a teacher last year; she was a first-year teacher who allowed them to walk all over her. She was a young, Black teacher. And so I think they were trying to see...young white

female...am I going to do the same thing she did. As soon as you kind of just put the foot down, they were fine.

Ms. Dawson attributed this issue mainly to her age rather than her race or the race of the girls. Additionally, Ms. Dawson's upbringing with respect to how to view authority may have contributed to her perception of the girls since they did not immediately respect Ms. Dawson's role as an authority in the classroom.

The only other perception that was demographically motivated besides that of race and gender was Ms. Dawson's perception of students based on their cognitive ability. Ms. Dawson has a range of cognitive abilities in her classes, but she does have a group of students that are specialized because of the school where she works. These students, she perceives to be highly motivated and moral, so she was disappointed and frustrated when they entered her class with rule infractions and basic issues she felt should not be present with students with higher cognitive abilities. She explained,

I expect them to do what they were supposed to do. They're going to achieve; they're going to follow direction. The ones that walked in day one and were already out of uniform, those were the ones that I already kind of like what are they trying to pull here...I expect you to bring in your freaking pencil and something to write with and to bring one for class. Inclusion kids, absolutely, you should have something, but I know you're not going to, whatever. Like you know you're supposed to bring a pencil. Don't be a jerk.

Ms. Dawson felt that students with high cognitive abilities should be more responsible than students who struggled with academics. Basic supplies that students should bring to class to complete work should not be a problem for students who were in an Honors or specialized

program of study; whereas, students who may struggle academically have more to concentrate on than whether or not they have a pencil or paper for class.

Behavior and Interactions

Ms. Dawson's interactions with students correspond with her own underlying ethical frameworks and the perceptions she has of students' morals. In the example above, her perception of students with higher cognitive ability directly related to her patience with their behavior. Ms. Dawson felt that they should be responsible and diligent, traits she held to be morally right. When students did not meet those moral expectations, Ms. Dawson felt as though they were doing this intentionally, which was unacceptable to her.

Ms. Dawson shared a story of a student who consistently refused to complete any schoolwork. He was failing her class, as well as his other classes but did not seem to care. She expressed her frustration with his inability to fit into the social construct of the school.

I asked him if he was okay with failing every class and not earning a diploma. He responded, he "would get his money anyways." I was so angry with this statement, I had to walk away. He has learned through his home life that education is not important and that money would still be able to come his way without earning it in a conventional manner. Who teaches our kids this? When did this become the new cultural norm? How can we move back on track to help our students realize the value of an education? This student then proceeded to walk out of the classroom. He just got up and walked out! In his eyes he did everything right, and I was wrong. I was so wrong he needed to leave the room to get away. (Dawson, Journal, December 9, 2016)

Not only was the student refusing to fit into the social construct of the institution, but he was also offended enough at Ms. Dawson's lack of respect for the social construct of his family that he risked suspension to leave her classroom.

Ms. Dawson recounted an instance in which a student acted against the social norms of peers his age, but, in doing so, he showed loyalty to someone close to him.

We had two girls going at it in the hallway, and the one was his girlfriend. I watched how he...I mean, they were about ready to come to blows. He got in the middle of it and kept pushing his girlfriend away because he knew if he touched the other girl, then other things would go off. He pushed her into another classroom, and he shut the door and stood out in the hallway just to make sure that the girl didn't go after her. And I stood out there and watched the whole thing. I was going to step in if I needed to, but I thought it was really interesting because most guys are like, "Yeah! Girl fight! Girl fight! Go for it!"

In this anecdote, Ms. Dawson noticed that the young man was trying to protect his girlfriend, which Ms. Dawson found to be admirable for two reasons. First, the student was acting against a negative social construct of his peer group, something that ends up being the exception rather than the rule for students at Midwest High School. Secondly, the student risked additional issues by getting in the middle of a fight that was not his in order to show loyalty to a young lady close to him. With loyalty being one of Ms. Dawson's deeply held moral virtues, she felt that this student had acted with integrity.

What I found particularly interesting about this experience Ms. Dawson relayed was that she perceived the student to be acting morally right, and instead of accepting that perception as

truth, she later confronted the student to ask his motivation for his actions to see if her perception was correct. She shared this interaction.

The next day, I asked him, “So what made you do what you did?” And he goes, “I can’t afford for her to get in trouble.” And I asked him what he meant by that. And he said that she makes him better, and he makes her better, so if one of them is in trouble, the other one is going to do something stupid...I don’t know their whole backstory, but it was really kind of cool to see how that kind of evolved.

When I asked Ms. Dawson what morals motivated this student’s actions, she said, “I think it’s the whole protect what’s mine. She’s his family. She’s where he gets his solace, and he doesn’t want anything to jeopardize that.” Ms. Dawson went on to share that she was so impressed by this incident that she shared her praise of this student’s integrity with the assistant principal. Of all the anecdotes she shared, Ms. Dawson felt that the most positive interactions were the ones where students acted out of moral integrity out of loyalty and obedience to authority.

Cross-case Analysis

Each of the four participants in this case study was asked a series of interview questions that focused on learning their underlying moral and ethical value system, as well as their perceptions of which moral or ethical value system their students held. This cross-case analysis will synthesize the responses of the participants based on the major themes derived from the research questions and interview responses.

Defining Morals and Ethics

The participants were asked to define morals and ethics and to give examples of each. For morals, all four participants felt that these were personal beliefs, meaning that morals were held by the individual to govern only that individual’s actions and behavior. Ms. Benson added that

these were typically religious values. For ethics, Ms. Benson was again the outlier, describing ethics as “big ideas,” or how right and wrong relate to the choices a person makes. The other three participants found ethics to be something that occurs in a professional setting, which Ms. Anson described as, “guidelines for respectful or professional behavior.”

Interestingly, all participants identified morals they felt were universally right, even though they felt that other morals vary depending on a person’s religion, family, peer group, and culture. The most referenced of these universals was honesty. The participants were presented with a series of scenarios that one might consider ethical dilemmas and asked to describe how they would solve each dilemma. With the dilemmas with an honesty component, the participants’ answers varied based on which ethical framework or moral theory they held to be their value system for decision making. One participant claimed she would lie in order to preserve someone’s feelings, which is in line with Mill’s (1863) Consequentialism. Even though she held the value herself, she felt that hurting others was more immoral than lying. Another participant felt that, although she would not lie, she would still speak in such a way as to avoid hurting the other person’s feelings, as well, by possibly changing the subject or asking a vague follow-up question. Finally, the other two participants felt that honesty was a higher moral than avoiding hurt feelings, so they claimed they would tell the truth even if they hurt the person in the process, knowing that honesty, to them, was paramount in their value system.

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory

While analyzing the interviews, I was able to code certain phrases and anecdotes to identify which ethical framework or moral theory the participants’ responses matched, as it relates to decision making during ethical dilemmas or when responding to students. I was also able to identify which ethical frameworks or moral theories the participants perceived their

students to use in behavior-related situations, although, as mentioned in this chapter, the participants did not have knowledge of the particular ethical frameworks and moral theories at any time during the research study. The table below represents this information matching the participant with which value system she held and which ones she perceived her students to hold. In the table, *P* represents the participants' personal value systems, and the *S* represents their perception of their students' value systems.

Table 1

Ethical Framework/Moral Theory Comparison Matrix

Framework →	<u>CS</u>		<u>RA</u>		<u>VE</u>		<u>MD</u>		<u>CT</u>		<u>ALT</u>	
Participants ↓	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
Ms. Anson	X	X	X				X	X	X			X
Ms. Benson	X				X	X		X				SCT
Ms. Carson	X	X			X				X			SCT
Ms. Dawson					X	X					SCT	SCT

Note: CS = Consequentialism, RA = Respect for Agents, VE = Virtue Ethics, MD = Stages of Moral Development, CT = Care Theory, ALT = alternate theory/framework, P = Personal, S = Student.

As mentioned in the previous section, the majority of the participants agreed that they would like to keep someone from having hurt feelings, which is in line with Mill's (1863) Consequentialism. Ms. Anson added to this reason by saying that her motivation for doing right was that she did not want to disappoint people. Similarly, Ms. Anson felt that students also held this value system, evidenced by their obvious remorse when they broke rules or committed an infraction that disappointed her.

I was not surprised that many of the participants held a list of virtues they believed were right, regardless of age, upbringing, race, or socioeconomic status. Honest and loyalty were the

most identified virtues, with respect and obedience not far behind. All participants felt that students also possessed the virtue of loyalty; however, some felt students showed an appropriate way to express this loyalty, and some felt that this loyalty was misguided because of the peer pressure the students endured.

Another common moral theory identified in the participants' interview responses was that of Kohlberg's (1981) Stages of Moral Development. Many participants felt that students were not mature enough mentally to understand the full scope of what it meant to make the right or wrong decisions. Ms. Anson and Ms. Benson felt that the students did not have fully developed brains and, therefore, could not consider all of the aspects of the abstractness of morality, although most children, they believed, were taught basic virtues at a young age. Ms. Carson and Ms. Dawson related moral maturity to grade levels, claiming that freshmen still had to be walked through ethical dilemmas and told what to do, whereas juniors and seniors were finally starting to make moral decisions autonomously.

During coding, I noticed an ethical framework represented that I had not anticipated. All of the participants referred to this in different ways, but they all spoke to one of the aspects of the ethical framework of morals being socially constructed. Ms. Carson and Ms. Anson said outright that morals were socially constructed; however, Ms. Dawson and Ms. Benson referred to this by different characteristics. Ms. Benson spoke of students behaving out of a sense of survival within their social group or environment, while Ms. Dawson referred to the framework of her students as their "street code." This ethical framework, Rousseau's (1762) Social Contract Theory, was not originally represented in the conceptual framework but will be added in Chapter Five during the discussion of this emergent finding.

Finally, with all of the participants, their final reasoning for why they interacted with students the way they did was because they care for the students. They care for their success, their morals, their futures, and their education. They care whether or not the students stay out of jail or even just the principal's office. All of the participants recounted stories of students with whom they had some type of behavioral conflict where the final decision that was made was motivated by their care for the students. In each case, if the student accepted that care, the teacher-student relationship continued in a positive manner, but if the student rejected the participant's care, the teacher-student relationship was destroyed and could not be repaired in any of the cases. This finding, discussed further in Chapter Five, is important to note for its discrepancy between the teachers' perceptions of care and Noddings' (2003) Care Theory, used in data analysis.

Perceptions About Students

The most common perception of students among the participants was that the students were not learning morals at home. Most felt that the responsibility of teaching morals fell on the school teachers who were involved in the daily lives of the students. Ms. Anson was the outlier for this perception. She felt that students were taught morals at home when they were very young; however, she felt they could not comprehend the purpose for the morals and therefore did not internalize them. Either way, the participants felt that there was a disconnect between the students' home lives and their moral behavior.

The only other perception the participants all agreed on was that certain demographics would determine if students behave morally or not. For example, all of the participants equated higher cognitive ability with morality, claiming that students who are in Honors and Advanced courses should be able to value education, sit quietly, work diligently, and behave maturely. Part

of this expectation was that these students would follow the rules of the school, so when this did not occur, the participants had little to no patience with the students, and the teacher-student relationship suffered.

Another demographic-based perception that most of the participants held in various forms was that all races, except White students, held a strong belief in the value of loyalty. One participant represented this perception through anecdotes that involved teaching students how the world really works if they choose loyalty over obedience to laws. Another participant felt that this loyalty was positive unless the students demonstrated loyalty by disrespecting authority.

Behavior and Interactions

One commonality among the participants was that they interacted with students based on their moral value system and the perceptions they had of students' morality. In the previous two sections, I identified these common perceptions. One perception—students not learning morals at home—elicited similar reactions among the participants. Mostly, participants felt that it was their responsibility to fill the gap between what students learned at home and the morals they should have in order to succeed in school and in life. This manifested itself on a continuum from offering scenarios in order to increase students' awareness of the various types of morals and ethical decisions that can be made when involved in a dilemma to directly teaching morals and insisting students learn these morals if they want to be successful.

Another common perception that elicited a reaction from participants was that students with higher cognitive ability have morals and should know how to behave. In describing interactions with students who did not meet this expectation, participants showed little patience and felt that students were misbehaving intentionally. This perception pushed teachers to expect

well-behaved students, as well as academically prepared students, which showed that the perception reached beyond morals into academic ability.

Lastly, the participants felt that students acted out of a sense of loyalty in many behavior-related situations. One participant described a situation where students would not work in class because of their loyalty to a more dominant friend who was lower academically. In order to not embarrass the friend, students refused to work so that the teacher could not assess whether or not they *could* do the work. Another participant described a more positive behavioral interaction where a student protected his girlfriend from a fight so that she would not get in trouble at school because he needed her to keep him on track. Other participants mentioned students who claimed to be in gangs or associated with a gang in order to gain protection; in these cases, loyalty was a requirement.

Interview Two Findings

The participants were interviewed a second time briefly. The questions allowed them to reflect on the process of delving into their perceptions and interactions with students (see Appendix F). Due to time restraints during the school year, only three of the participants were able to be interviewed this second time. Ms. Carson was not able to participate in interview two. Commonly, among the three other participants, journaling was beneficial for self-reflection. Ms. Anson felt that journaling and reflecting on her perceptions and interactions with students helped her to look at her relationships and performance more closely in order to make adjustments. Similarly, Ms. Benson and Ms. Dawson saw the reflective value in journaling in helping them to replay situations in order to determine which interactions were handled properly and which situations could have been avoided. As a whole, they advised novice teachers to build

relationships with students by finding “new and better ways” (Anson, Interview Two, March 14, 2017) to reach all students.

Conclusion

Each of the four participants for this study candidly shared the experiences that influenced their own moral value systems, as well as what morals and ethics they perceive their students to hold. The data collected in this study showed the participants’ unique experiences, as well as anecdotes from their upbringing that shaped their definitions of right and wrong. This study shared information about the participants’ moral and ethical beliefs and the participants’ perceptions of the students’ moral and ethical beliefs both influence how teachers interact with students and the nature of the reciprocal relationship. In the same vein, these findings show a variety of conclusions that the researcher can draw related to teachers and student behavior.

In the next chapter, I will provide a summary of this qualitative case study and discuss the findings as they relate to the literature on moral theories, ethical frameworks, teacher perceptions, and teacher-student relationships. Following that, I will present what I feel are answers or conclusions for the research questions. Finally, I will present the limitations for the study and offer recommendations for future research studies in the field of morality and ethics.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In Chapter Four, the cases for four teachers from Midwest High School were presented with findings related to their own ethical frameworks and moral theories used for decision making, their perceptions of which ethical frameworks and moral theories students use for decision making in behavior-related situations, their general perceptions about student morals, and the impact of these perceptions on the teacher-student relationship. As discussed in Chapter Four, participants did not have knowledge of the ethical frameworks and moral theories used in data analysis. Where the phrases “the participants utilized” or “the participants used” is followed by an ethical framework or moral theory, this means that during data analysis, I coded the data as one of those value structures by matching the characteristics of the ethical framework or moral theory to the participant data.

In this chapter, I will restate the purpose and methodology for the study, and discuss the findings situated within the context of the research questions and literature, including analytic generalizations. The conclusions for this study are derived from the findings in Chapter Four related to the themes discovered during data analysis. Finally, I will discuss recommendations for further research and share my final thoughts related to the research study.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore high school teachers’ perceptions of students’ morals and ethical frameworks in relation to classroom behaviors and what the implications are for these perceptions on how teachers interact with their students. Through this study, I examined how teachers interacted with their students in behavior-related situations with relation to their

own and their perceptions of their students' ethical frameworks and moral theories, as discussed in the literature review.

Initially, five participants volunteered from Midwest High School, but one had to decline to continue due to personal commitments. The four remaining participants were asked questions regarding their own value systems, how they would respond when presented with ethical dilemmas, and what, if any, perceptions they held of the moral value systems of students and motivations for their behavior. Each question was designed to extrapolate information that examined how teacher perceptions impacted the teacher-student relationship. All four participants taught at the same high school but in different content areas. The participants were all White females and ranged in age from their 20s to mid-50s.

Data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. These interviews were completed in two sessions at places of the participants' choosing. The original interview included 24 questions with additional follow-up questions that arose during conversation. The interviews lasted from 65 minutes to two and a half hours with an additional 20-minute closing discussion that concentrated on a reflection of the interview process and thinking during and after journaling.

The research questions for the study are below:

1. How do high school teachers perceive underlying morals and ethics of their students?
2. How do teacher perceptions of their students' morals and ethics influence teacher-student interactions?
3. What other implications for the classroom, if any, are implicit in these teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics?

Data were analyzed using descriptive and pattern coding and presented in the previous chapter in a thematic analysis and cross-case analysis based on the research questions. Answers to these questions were taken from the participant interviews using transcripts. In the following section, I will outline the answers to the research questions, situated within the context of the literature on ethical frameworks, moral theories, teacher perceptions, and the teacher-student relationship.

Discussion

As outlined in Chapter Two, research has been conducted on teacher perceptions and their relation to the teacher-student relationship (Lynn et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2009; Modlin, 2008; Mucci, 2014; Myers & Pianta, 2008; Poulou, 2009) and student behavior and ethics, particularly African American students (Benner & Graham, 2009; Kang, 2006; Llamas, 2012; Meehan et al., 2003; Roberts, 2010; Roderick, 2003; Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004; Thomas et al., 2009). This research study is meant to add to the research on teacher perceptions and the link between these perceptions, student behavior, and the teacher-student relationship. This section discusses the findings in the context of the research questions.

Research Question One

How do high school teachers perceive underlying morals and ethics of their students? Specific questions were asked in the first interview that allowed the participants to give information on their perceptions of student morals and ethics. Some of the questions were related to the demographics of students they have taught that allowed the participants to reflect on student behavior and share opinions of moral motivations for student behaviors. In another section of the interview, the questions were represented as case studies, where the participants had the opportunity to resolve the dilemma based on what morals and ethics they held and then

make a judgment call as to how their students would solve the same dilemma. Many had experienced or discussed similar dilemmas in their classroom, so the data were authentic.

It is important to note here that teachers first had to settle on what their own definitions were for morals and ethics in order to decide what values they believed their students to hold and how to place those values or behaviors into the categories of right or wrong. For the most part, all of the participants held that morals were personal values, and ethics were professional, in nature. Ms. Anson felt that ethical guidelines were the way we respected other people's morals, which is closely aligned to Campbell (2003), who defined ethics as the way we apply morals in social situations.

Perception #1: Students are not learning morals at home. One of the main perceptions voiced by the participants was that students came to school without a moral value system on which to base decisions and behavior. Three of the participants believed that it was the responsibility of the teacher to help the students learn right from wrong. Ms. Anson was again the outlier, feeling, rather, that it was only her responsibility to offer options to ethical dilemmas and to let the students choose from those options, based on their value system. This contradicts Mucci (2014), who found that students came to school with an established value system or set of morals and that teachers could not make students adopt their morals. Adversely, Gay (2000) and Tyler et al. (2010) found that there was home-school dissonance, which could account for why the participants felt that students were not learning morals at home. Simply, the morals students are taught at home are not recognized by educators as valid values from which to make decisions and guide behavior. This means the teacher and the student are speaking two different moral languages, which can cause friction during their interactions.

Perception #2: Demographics are a factor in student morality. Each participant felt that morality was influenced by various student demographics, a perception supported by Llamas (2012) discussed in Chapter Two who found student demographics to have a strong influence on teacher perceptions. Particularly, students with high cognitive ability were perceived to have higher morals that guided their behavior. In addition, Ms. Carson perceived that her African American students were characterized by a competitive nature that dominated their decision making and behavior. According to the anecdotes shared by the participants, this competitive behavior manifested itself in aggressive behavior including fighting and verbal attacks. Meehan et al. (2003) found that a correlation existed between this aggressive behavior and the teacher-student relationship, which show the importance, again, of building that relationship. Studies by Thomas et al. (2009) and Llamas (2012) agreed with this correlation, taking it a step further to show that racial bias on the part of the teacher would result in poor student behavior.

Additionally, all participants perceived minority students to hold the virtue of loyalty. Ms. Benson and Ms. Dawson, particularly, perceived students to often act out of loyalty to friends and family. Ms. Benson responded by trying to help students understand the full impact of their decision if the decision and behavior were to occur in a societal context. Ms. Dawson felt that student loyalty manifested itself in both positive and negative ways. She shared an anecdote of a student who protected his girlfriend from fighting because he did not want her to get into trouble at school. On the negative side, she shared many instances where she felt that loyalty caused students to disrespect authority and limit their own future success.

Perception #3: Student morals are socially constructed. Rousseau's (1762) Social Contract Theory was a dominant theme throughout the interview responses. Since the theory emerged from the data, it was not included in the initial conceptual framework, represented in

Chapter Two. After coding, data were fed through ethical frameworks and moral theories as lenses, which then included Social Contract Theory. The revised, or final, conceptual framework is represented below.

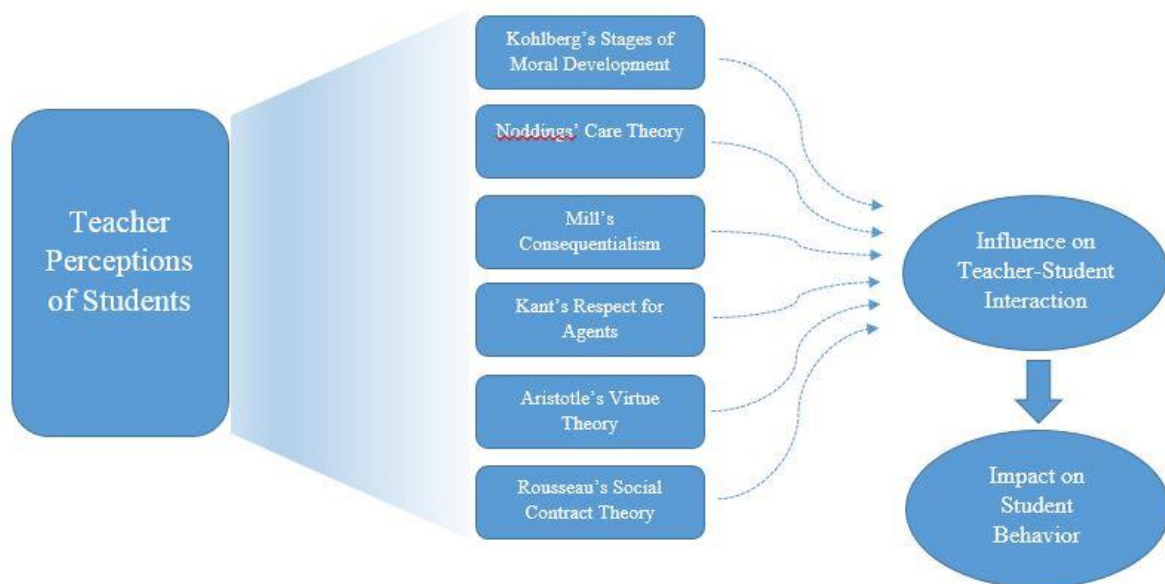


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework derived from the literature review and finalized after additions from emergent data. Citations available in References section.

Rousseau (1762) believed that the rights citizens hold are derived from the collective; therefore, all must be in agreement with the collective in order to be right or moral. In addition, Social Contract Theory asserts that some type of unspoken agreement exists between people of the same society that causes them to behave reciprocally for the benefit of the society and one another (Rachels & Rachels, 2015). Ms. Dawson shared that her students have what she calls a “street code,” where they behave in such a way that is in conflict with the morals and rules of the institution, a society in itself; in contrast, this street code is the social contract to which Ms. Dawson believes her students to have ascribed. One factor that could account for this supposed misbehavior was researched by Benner and Graham (2009) who found that African

American students had trouble transitioning from middle school to high school because of a feeling of loss of identity. As discussed earlier, this could be due to the home-school dissonance, or the disconnect between the values learned in the home and the school environment (Gay, 2000; Roderick, 2003; Tyler et al., 2010). When this dissonance is felt by the student, they often revert back to their comfort zone of behavior, which is a survival mode from their home culture (Dyer, 2014; Oyserman & Destin, 2010). The participants did express a desire and attempt to show some understanding for this cultural difference and acted out of what they felt was care for the students who reverted to this place of safety (Noddings, 2003). Whether this was in line with Noddings' Care Theory or not will be discussed later in this chapter.

In his explanation, *The Social Contract*, Rousseau (1762) asserted that social order is not a natural right; it was determined first by power. If this continued, however, right would always change as power changed, and this would cause the strongest to always be right. He believed there must be a better way since the strongest is not always morally right.

The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and the goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone and remain as free as before. (p. 8)

Social Contract Theory was his answer. Rachels & Rachels (2015) explain that for this to work for a group, there would need to be reciprocity from all members, an unspoken agreement to abide by the rules, or morals, set forth by the collective. In the findings, we see that participants felt that loyalty to family or certain peer groups motivated students' morals and behavior. Particularly, Ms. Benson and Ms. Dawson saw this loyalty as both positive and negative, depending on the context of the loyalty. In some instances, students showed loyalty to their social group by protecting them from trouble. Ms. Dawson viewed this as positive. In other

instances, students showed loyalty to their social group by refusing to answer questions in class, learn new concepts, or follow rules. Both Ms. Dawson and Ms. Benson perceived this to be negative to the students' success in any society outside of the students' own, which was often motivated by a more powerful member who participants felt did not have students' success in mind or by students being grandfathered into a social group due to family tradition.

Although the social contract can promote harmony in societies, an important issue exists for American schools. If the social contract involves a collective of people who benefit reciprocally, we cannot expect oppressed populations to be represented in the contract because they cannot benefit those who are not oppressed, even though the non-oppressed can benefit them; therefore, they cannot reap the benefits (Rachels & Rachels). It is certain that students and educators alike would disagree that this component of Social Contract Theory is morally right. An interesting study would be to investigate the unspoken social contracts present in secondary schools and how these contracts impact marginalized student groups.

Perception #4: Students in high school have emerging moral standards. Ms. Anson and Ms. Benson felt that students showed a moral maturity based on their age, many of which were not able to show that maturity until senior year if at all. Ms. Carson and Ms. Dawson perceived students to show moral maturity based on their grade level, particularly, in agreement with Ms. Anson and Ms. Benson, that students were not able to show even the slightest moral maturity until junior or senior year of high school.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Kohlberg (1981) describes this phenomenon as the Stages of Moral Development. From what the participants describe, students in the early levels of high school would mostly fall within the conventional stages of moral development. Particularly, as discussed in perception #3, students who are at the lower end of understanding their place in a

society, even if it is not a moral one, are in Stage 4: Society Maintaining, where students merely make moral decisions to fit into society (Kohlberg, 1981). This society may be the classroom, a certain group of friends, or their race or culture. When stating that students' moral maturity emerges in the junior and senior years of high school, the participants are describing Kohlberg's 5th Stage of Moral Development, Social Contract. This is one of the main themes based on data analysis. In this stage, much like Rousseau's (1962) Social Contract Theory, students behave morally for the good of society, as well as the benefit to themselves. As Ms. Benson described it, "They finally get it." She felt students eventually figure out their place in the society they chose.

Research Question Two

How do teacher perceptions of their students' morals and ethics influence teacher-student interactions? Although Modlin (2008) found that teachers did not believe their relationships with students had any effect on student behavior, the participants in this study felt differently. All four of the study participants felt that their reactions to students in behavior-related situations had a direct impact on how students acted in the future and that the teachers could manipulate these behaviors as they navigated building relationships with the students that showed what the participants described as *care*. Mucci (2014) agrees in that the Catholic teachers in his study felt that they could influence the future behavior of a student by their reaction to current behavior infractions.

One way teachers could influence student behavior, then, would be to recognize student morals before making judgments regarding how to deal with particular behaviors. Not only is it important to attempt to understand the morals students are applying to behavior, but it is also important for teachers not to impose their own moral value system on students because they feel it is the best one. With regard to the ethical frameworks and moral theories, too much

subjectivity exists with regard to which is right or wrong or even how they are ranked amongst themselves to impose a perceived empirical value system in lieu of understanding, appreciating, and cultivating students' values.

To answer this research question, the best way is to relate the perceptions to the teacher's interactions with students. The first perception discussed above was that teachers did not think students were learning morals at home. The participants expressed that this perception caused them to react to student misbehavior with more understanding and care. Most felt that since students were not learning these morals at home, that it was the teacher's responsibility to teach these morals as teachable moments arose. Ms. Anson felt that in these teachable moments, she did not need to teach students particular morals, but she should offer them all of the options and let them choose which one fit with their already-established value system.

For the second perception discussed above, teachers referenced moral perceptions that they tied to different student groups. For students with high cognitive ability, the participants felt that these students held to a higher moral value system. The participants then expressed that they not only increased expectations for this student group, but also maintained little patience for their misbehavior. Adversely, the participants' perceptions of African American students seemed to increase their patience. They felt that these students needed more guidance and care in order to be successful in a society that would expect young people to emerge from high school ready to either go to college to begin educating themselves for a career or ready to contribute positively to the workforce. For this reason, the participants educated students in the societal norms when misbehavior occurred.

The effects of the third perception on the participants' interactions with students was similar to that of the second perception. Since teachers felt that student morals were socially

constructed, they taught students a positive view of the social contract, where rules existed for the purpose of order. Especially Ms. Dawson attempted to teach students that power was not the determinant for right, as Rousseau (1762) also believed. This seemed to be an issue with her students because they would base their behavior on the dominant peer in their social group. In contrast, the participants attempted to teach their students that when all students behave morally by obeying the rules of the school, all of the students benefited.

Considering the impact of perception four on teacher-student interactions and relationships, teachers felt that because students were not morally mature until later in high school, if at all, the expectations for behavior should be adjusted. Primarily, the participants showed more care and patience to students in the earlier levels of high school in regards to misbehavior than they did with older students. In my experience as a former educator, this is common among teachers, in that students in the lower grades in high school need more coaching and care to become morally mature by the time they were ready to join society.

Research Question Three

What other implications for the classroom, if any, are implicit in these teacher perceptions of student morals and ethics?

Care and justice. One important consideration that has deep implications in the classroom is the ideas of care and justice with regard to race, teacher perceptions, the teacher-student relationship, and student behavior. In the literature, we saw that African American parents hoped to maintain both care and justice equally for their children as they transitioned to desegregated schools (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). In the findings for this study, Ms. Anson showed care to her students through interactions. She shared her attempts to connect with students through conversation in order to bond. Ms. Carson also expressed her attempt to show

care through mutual nurturing and respect. Both Ms. Anson's and Ms. Carson's methods are in line with Noddings' Care Theory. Noddings (2003) discusses the three elements needed to establish the caring relationship between the teacher and the student: dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Ms. Anson and Ms. Carson both describe having casual conversations with students that involve humor and personal experiences. This dialogue should be practiced many times in school in order for the care to be confirmed to both the teacher and the student since Care Theory is built on reciprocal caring (Noddings, 2003). From their responses, Ms. Anson and Ms. Carson believe this method works in establishing a positive teacher-student relationship and in eliciting positive student behavior.

Another aspect of care is when the one-caring shows care in a different way than the cared-for recognizes care. In Chapter Two, I showed this with love languages (Chapman, 2005). The findings show that there are times when participants express they are interacting with students in a caring manner when students are not recognizing this as caring and are, in turn, resisting rules and behaving negatively (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). A major reason for this misunderstanding between a teacher's and student's definition of care could be the race of the teacher being different from the race of the student (Kang, 2006; Roberts, 2010). Siddle Walker & Snarey (2004) discuss that African American students see justice as part of care, so teachers would have to know how to show care in a way that also shows justice. Katz, Noddings, and Strike (1999) support that students believe in their basic right to an education that is equitable. I would take that a step further from the findings to say that teachers also must show justice in the equitable treatment of students in the educational setting. After the first, surely the second, negative interaction that the teacher perceived as caring and the student rejected, an adjustment should be made in order to salvage the teacher-student relationship.

Finally, all of the participants were White, and the prominent race discussed in the data was African American students. Some participants described interactions with several African American students as acting out of care for their futures and their success. In these interactions, many times the participants would describe discussing the students' behaviors in the moment in front of their peers. The teacher believes herself to be acting out of care, while this occurrence may appear uncaring and as an injustice to the students. An African American teacher may speak privately with the student in order to discuss more serious societal implications of a young person of color breaking the rules or showing disrespect, where a White teacher might not feel comfortable doing that (Roberts, 2010). This would imply that classroom management training should include differences according to race, among many other variables a teacher may encounter in the classroom.

Multicultural understanding. Due to the strong correlation between teacher perceptions and student demographics with the participants in this study and with Llamas (2012), multicultural understanding, and possibly education, is vital for teachers in diverse schools and districts. Assumptions made by the participants influence their interactions with students and, consequently, their relationship. In order to build a strong teacher-student relationship, and, therefore, maintain appropriate moral behavior, teachers must value students' experiences and consider student motivations for behavior. This may be difficult, as many teacher education programs encourage teachers-in-training to craft specific classroom management plans before meeting their students. Although my undergraduate teacher education program asked me to consider how I would manage a classroom with various cognitive abilities, I did not have the experience of learning the differences between the thought patterns, morals, and behaviors of students of diverse cultures and races. This, however, could have changed since my

undergraduate program. Regardless, moral and ethical understanding of students should be part of every teacher education program, just as multicultural and cognitive ability level education already is.

Imposing morals. Additionally, teachers must be careful not to impose personal moral values on their students because a mismatch may exist that will affect the teacher-student relationship (Gay, 2000; Roderick, 2003; Tyler et al., 2010). Brown (2016) warned against this as he found that teachers use their moral value systems to make decisions but that these decisions may involve ethical conflicts for which the teacher was not prepared. Lastly, from the findings from the second interview (Anson, March 14, 2017; Benson, March 8, 2017; Dawson, March 10, 2017), reflective practices may increase teachers' awareness and close attention to what role their perceptions of students' morals and ethics play in the teacher-student relationship.

Conclusions

The findings in this case study have contributed to literature on teacher perceptions and the impact of those perceptions on students. As researchers have found, the topic of teacher perceptions is significant to student-teacher interaction and, consequently, student behavior (Gay, 2000; Llamas, 2012; Modlin, 2008; Myers & Pianta, 2008). This study will also contribute to literature examining morals and ethics in an educational context, particularly with teachers and students, as most of the literature on examining ethics has been conducted around business ethics or the ethics of the school administrator (Frick, 2011; Gross & Shapiro, 2004; Hughes & Jones, 2010; Pede, 2015; Sun, 2011).

This study also examined the claim from Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell (2003) that African American males are being suspended at a much higher rate than their other-racial counterparts by asking participants to identify any demographically based perceptions. Studying

teacher perceptions regarding the moral principles and ethical reasoning of the study site majority demographic helped illuminate reasons for these higher rates of office referrals, resulting in suspensions. The study will help educators understand the need to address students' morals and ethics with regards to the students' behavior to hopefully keep students in the classroom for maximum academic learning time.

Limitations

This study had five limitations, discussed in Chapter One. The first two limitations deal with the context of the study: (1) only one school was asked to participate in the study, and (2) the criteria for selecting the school was decided from the researcher's intrinsic motivation (see *Positionality*). Besides the case study design and constructivist theoretical underpinning, these two limitations restrict the generalizability of the findings by normal research standards (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2000). According to researcher, Yin (2014), however, case studies like this one can carry analytic generalizations, which can be likened to lessons learned from the study. One significant analytic generalization deals with students and teachers finding common ground through which they can understand and communicate moral and ethical differences. This analytic generalization will be discussed in the recommendations for future research.

Another limitation of this study was researcher bias. This occurs when previous knowledge, experience, or beliefs influence the way the researcher analyzes data or even the choices in shaping the interview questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Savin-Baden & Majors, 2013). I engaged in reflexivity in order to contain and avoid bias in the analysis and findings. In addition, I elicited the services of an external auditor to ensure that my reflexivity was successful by not imposing my bias on the data.

The fourth limitation for this study was, unfortunately, unavoidable due to the time frame in which the study was to be conducted. The study was limited by the participants who volunteered being all White females. As Kang (2006), Roberts (2010), and Siddle Walker and Snarey (2005) suggest, there may be a difference between the way White teachers interact with African American students and the way African American teachers interact with students of their own race. Due to the findings related to how the participants perceived and interacted with African American students, further research could consider drawing from a larger population of diverse participants in order to examine the differences in these racial interactions.

The final limitation for this study related to the time of year in which data were collected. I interviewed teachers in the late fall/early winter, and then they journaled for the next several weeks. First, interviewing the teachers about their perceptions of students close to the middle of the year could have made their responses different than they would have been had the participants been interviewed at the beginning or end of the school year. This is a consideration of the time it takes for a teacher to build a relationship with a student. In addition, journaling occurred surrounding winter break and continued into semester finals, which may have contributed to the low number of participant entries. Beginning data collection just one month earlier or later in the school year would remedy the timing of the journals. Also, I would be interested to examine the differences in teacher perceptions of students they just met at the beginning of the school year and the perceptions from this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Student Perceptions

Primarily, this study has opened an avenue for further research examining student ethical reasoning from their own perspectives to see if there is a mismatch, as asserted by Roderick

(2003) and Tyler et al. (2010) and confirmed through the findings in this case study. I found it compelling that all of the participants utilized a variety of ethical frameworks and moral theories for decision making instead of focusing on a single value system. For this reason, future studies on student ethical reasoning could assist educators in finding a common ground for moral understanding between teachers and students. In this common ground, through analytic generalizations (Yin, 2014) from the findings in this study, a common understanding of the moral and ethical value systems of students and teachers of one another, the student-teacher relationship could be more positive, which could lead to more appropriate student behavior (Myers & Pianta, 2008).

Teacher's Role

In addition to studies on student moral value systems, I believe an area that needs further research is identifying if teachers have a role in educating students on morals and ethics. The participants in the study felt that they did hold that responsibility, although one felt that her responsibility stopped at awareness. Studies on a larger population of teachers could reveal first whether or not teachers felt that they should even be involved in the moral education of students. Then, if they felt they did have a role in moral education, it would be important to determine at what level this role should occur: awareness, direct instruction, or support. If this role could be determined, teacher education programs could instruct teachers in how to incorporate that level of moral education within their specific content areas.

Moral Motivators

During data analysis, I noticed that the participants could not agree on a common motivation for student moral behavior. Participants seemed to agree on various motivations for behavior they deemed immoral or inappropriate, which are discussed in Chapter Four; however,

many motivations were given through conjecture, such as disappointment of authority, peer pressure, guilt, fear, and safety. This is an area that could use more research to help educators determine why students choose moral behavior over immoral in order to encourage a more frequent occurrence of moral behavior.

Implications

I was a classroom teacher for nearly twelve years, starting in a rural community and moving into a highly diverse, urban community. In addition to future research on student perceptions, teachers' roles, and moral motivators filling gaps in or confirming research studies in this area, these topics for future research have practical implications, which is vital to the classroom teacher. The question even I asked the most when I started this doctoral program was, "But how can teachers use this?" As the participants found and I can attest to from experience, the relationship a teacher has with his or her students can set the tone for that classroom and the interactions that students have with the teacher and with one another for the duration of the school year. Understanding the moral motivations behind students' behaviors and decision making, learning in their teacher education programs about how to recognize and enact the role the teacher should play in ethical and moral education, and examining students' ethics and morals from their own perspectives could be valuable to the overall peace in the classroom.

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Appendix A

Participation Request Letter

Dear _____ :

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at {insert school name}. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Studies Ph.D. program at Ball State University in Muncie, IN and am in the process of completing doctoral dissertation research. The study is entitled *High School Teacher Perceptions of Student Morals and Ethics and the Influence of these Perceptions on the Teacher-Student Relationship: A Qualitative Case Study*. IRB approval has already been received, which is the approval of an institutional committee that ensures all ethical standards are met for the research study to be conducted. District approval is based on school willingness to participate and has already been discussed with the district research office.

I hope to recruit several interested teachers from your school to participate in the study. Teachers who volunteer to participate will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to the primary researcher at the beginning of the research process. Data collection will occur in the fall of 2016 through Winter 2017, beginning as soon as the study can be presented to teachers. Interviews will take place on teachers' free time at the place of their choosing.

No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants. To recruit teachers for this study, I would like to set a time when I can come to your school and speak to your teaching staff either during staff or department meetings.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact me at my email address: snludwig@bsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Stacy N. Ludwig

Ball State University

Muncie, IN

(740)336-2511

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Study Title

High School Teacher Perceptions of Student Morals and Ethics and the Influence of these Perceptions on the Teacher-Student Relationship: A Qualitative Case Study

Study Purpose and Rationale

My purpose for this study is to understand teacher perceptions of student morality in Midwest School District in regards to the influence of these perceptions on teacher-student interactions. Varying perceptions will be considered based on student race and teacher values. I am conducting this qualitative study in partial fulfillment of my doctoral program in the Educational Studies program at Ball State University during 2016-2017. You are being invited to participate in this study because it is necessary for the researcher to learn the perspectives of high school teachers who are involved with African American students on a daily basis.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be over the age of 18, be able to read at a secondary level, and hold a teaching position at the chosen high school in the Midwest public school district.

Participation Procedures and Duration

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews, at the beginning and end of data collection, to share your experiences with and perceptions relating to the morality and behavior of students in your classrooms, past and present. Each interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete and will be conducted during the 2016-2017 school year. Interviews will be conducted at a time and place mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher. In addition, the researcher will ask you to keep an anecdotal journal to record perceptions in real time. Participants can choose whether to keep a digital journal in Google Drive or a print journal, provided by the researcher. Measures have been taken to ensure that Google Drive journal entries shared with the researcher are kept secure by adding an encryption application, *HTTPS Everywhere*, to the researcher's laptop and employing unique and private login credentials.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity

All data gathered during this project, specifically interview transcriptions and journals, will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information, such as your name and names of other

individuals you may mention, including your organization and specific geographic location, will appear in transcriptions, narratives used in the analysis, and the dissertation final presentation and report. All names will be generalized to a state and region (i.e. Midwest School District), and pseudonyms will be used for all participants and any students mentioned during interviews and/or journaling. In addition, research participants' will not be identified to the school principal or district administration. Furthermore, with your permission and for the purpose of accuracy, each interview will be recorded by an iPhone 6 using a digital recording application. Before the interviews are transcribed, the researcher will upload the interviews onto a personal, fingerprint-protected laptop, and the original recordings will be permanently deleted from the iPhone. The researcher will then transcribe the interviews. The print anecdotal journals will be number coded so that identifying information is not used on the artifact for the protection of the teacher. If the participant wishes to use a shared document with the researcher through Google Drive for the journal, the researcher commits not to link the shared information with any identifying information in the final report.

Storage of Data

Transcriptions and journals will be stored in a locked file drawer in the researcher's home office. If the researcher wishes to discard the raw data collected during the study, she will shred the transcriptions and journals or physically destroy the computer files for the participants' protection. The data will be stored for up to five years. The researcher will then permanently delete the data from the laptop and destroy all other raw data. Only the researcher will have access to all raw data gathered during this study. If, at any time, you decide to withdraw from the study, the information collected during your interviews, transcriptions, and journals will be shredded and/or permanently deleted.

Risks and Benefits

The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions as it may be perceived as a conflict of interest to provide specific information about how you feel about student morality and their behavior. This may also cause psychological discomfort if you perceive your ideas and opinions to contradict what is considered "right". You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable, and you may quit the study at any time without penalty. Although there may not be direct benefits to participants in the study (e.g., You are not receiving monetary compensation.), the information you provide the researcher may be beneficial to the fields of education and sociology in that findings may illuminate reasons for student reactions based on teacher perceptions and may provide the field with an avenue for further research regarding what can be done to help teachers better interact with students of different moral frameworks than their own.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator.

Consent

I agree to participate in this research project entitled, *High School Teacher Perceptions of Student Morals and Ethics and the Influence of these Perceptions on the Teacher-Student Relationship: A Qualitative Case Study*. I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

Participant Name (print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Stacy N. Ludwig, Graduate Student, Educational Studies; Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306; Telephone: (740)336-2511; Email: snludwig@bsu.edu

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Cathy Siebert, Educational Studies; Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306; Telephone: (765)285-5465; Email: cjsiebert@bsu.edu

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Director, Office of Research Integrity; Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306 (765)285-5070, irb@bsu.edu

Appendix C

Interview One Questions

Part I: Moral History

1. What are morals?
2. What are ethics?
3. How young were you when you remember starting to learn right from wrong?
4. Who taught you right from wrong?
5. If you can, please share some of the morals you were taught when you were younger.

*Follow-up questions as necessary for clarity of experiences.

Part II: Moral Dilemmas (adapted from other sources, as indicated): You will be offered a series of dilemmas. You will answer how you would resolve the dilemma, and then you will justify your reasoning for your choice.

1. Your best friend just got a new haircut. When you see her, you realize her new haircut looks more like Alan Jackson's mullet. "What do you think?" she asks. What do you tell her? (Rachels & Rachels, 2015)
2. Why did you make this decision?
3. Antigone (have you heard her story?) had two brothers: one was loyal to her uncle, King Creon. The other was a traitor in the revolution against King Creon, a justifiable revolution. The traitor brother died in battle. Antigone wanted to perform the burial rites so that his soul would pass on, but Creon passed a law that the traitors would rot where they died on the battlefield. Antigone wanted to cover his body in dirt in the night, but King Creon decreed that anyone caught burying the bodies would be put to death.
 - a. If you were Antigone, would you obey King Creon's law, or would you bury your brother's body? Explain your reasoning.
 - b. If you were Creon, upon finding out that it was your own niece who buried one of the traitors, would you put her to death according to your decree or would you show mercy? Explain your reasoning.
4. When you were younger, your boyfriend/girlfriend began dating someone else before breaking up with you. This was very hurtful to you and your whole family after you found out that not only was your old boyfriend/girlfriend telling this person bad things about you and your family that were not true, but also that they were getting married. After they get married, you find out your old boyfriend's/girlfriend's new spouse is spreading the nasty rumors to people in your circle of friends. The next time you see her/him, how do you treat that person? Explain your reasoning.
5. You find out that a mutual friend is lying to your brother behind his back about not being able to spend time with your brother. Telling your brother what is really happening will make him very unhappy. Keeping the secret from him, on the other hand, will not affect his happiness if he never finds out the truth. What do you do? Explain your reasoning.

Part III: High School Students and Morality

1. Some people say that it is not the job of the school to teach morals to K-12 students, that it is the job of the parents only. What would you say to those people?
2. What morals do your students hold?
3. How do you know they hold these morals?
4. Describe a situation in which a student behaved how you expected and that behavior was right.
5. Why did you consider that student's choice to be "right"?
6. Describe a situation in which a student behaved how you expected and that behavior was wrong.
7. Why did you consider that student's choice to be "wrong"?
8. What determines a student's choice to behave the way he or she chooses to behave?
9. What are the behavioral characteristics of your ideal student?
10. I'm going to ask you to talk about the expectations you have for your students based on several demographic characteristics. What differences are there in your behavioral expectations for your students depending on their age?
11. Gender?
12. Race?
13. Family make-up?
14. Socio-economic status?

Appendix D

Directions for Anecdotal Journaling

In order to gather the most useful data for this research study, you are asked to journal often. The purpose of this journal is to learn your perspectives and emotions regarding students during situations that relate to what you believe to be student misbehavior. No misbehavior is “too severe” or “too minor” to record; rather, all experience in this area will be vital for the researcher to analyze.

Journals should...

- Include as much detail as possible about the incident and the student (age, gender, race, grade, etc.)
- Be written in first person
- Include all feelings and thoughts you have regarding morality pertaining to the incident (e.g., “The student responded this way because he felt it to be an injustice.”)
- Be written as soon as you have time to record the incident and your perceptions for the purpose of accuracy and authenticity

While recording in the journal, it is not necessary for you to include students’ names. You should take care not to include last names of students under any circumstance. Pseudonyms can be used, first names only, to be changed to pseudonyms later, or generic terms, such as “student,” or “adolescent.” The focus of this journal is not the student; it is your thoughts about the situations in your classroom.

Appendix E

List of Descriptive Codes

Descriptive Codes

Master Codes

EF	Ethical Framework
MT	Moral Theory
DMP	Moral perception related to a demographic characteristic

Subcodes

EF-CS	Consequentialism
EF-RA	Respect for Agents
EF-VE	Virtue Ethics
EF-ALT	Alternate ethical framework
MT-MD	Stages of Moral Development
MT-CT	Care Theory

Pattern Codes

PATT-PRECON	Theme in preconventional stage of moral development
PATT-CON	Theme in conventional stage of moral development
PATT-POSTCON	Theme in conventional stage of moral development

Appendix F

Closing Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. What advice would you give a new teacher about interacting with his/her students and classroom management?
2. Do you feel the journaling has had any impact on you personally or professionally?
3. Were there any instances in which you feel the way in which you interacted with a particular student changed over the course of the semester? In what ways? What do you think accounts for that?
4. Do you wish to share any final comments about student morals and ethics, interacting with students, or the journaling process?

Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Approval



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: August 2, 2016
TO: Stacy Ludwig
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 939050-1
TITLE: High School Teacher Perceptions of Student Morals and Ethics and the Influence of These Perceptions on Teacher-Student Interactions: A Qualitative Case Study
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: August 2, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: EXEMPT

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on August 2, 2016 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Exempt Categories:

	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
X	Category 2: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior
	Category 3: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
	Category 4: Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or

	if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
	Category 5: Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.
	Category 6: Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Editorial Notes:

1. Approve (Category 2) with informed consent (taped interviews)

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

Bryan Byers, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/Director
Office of Research Integrity